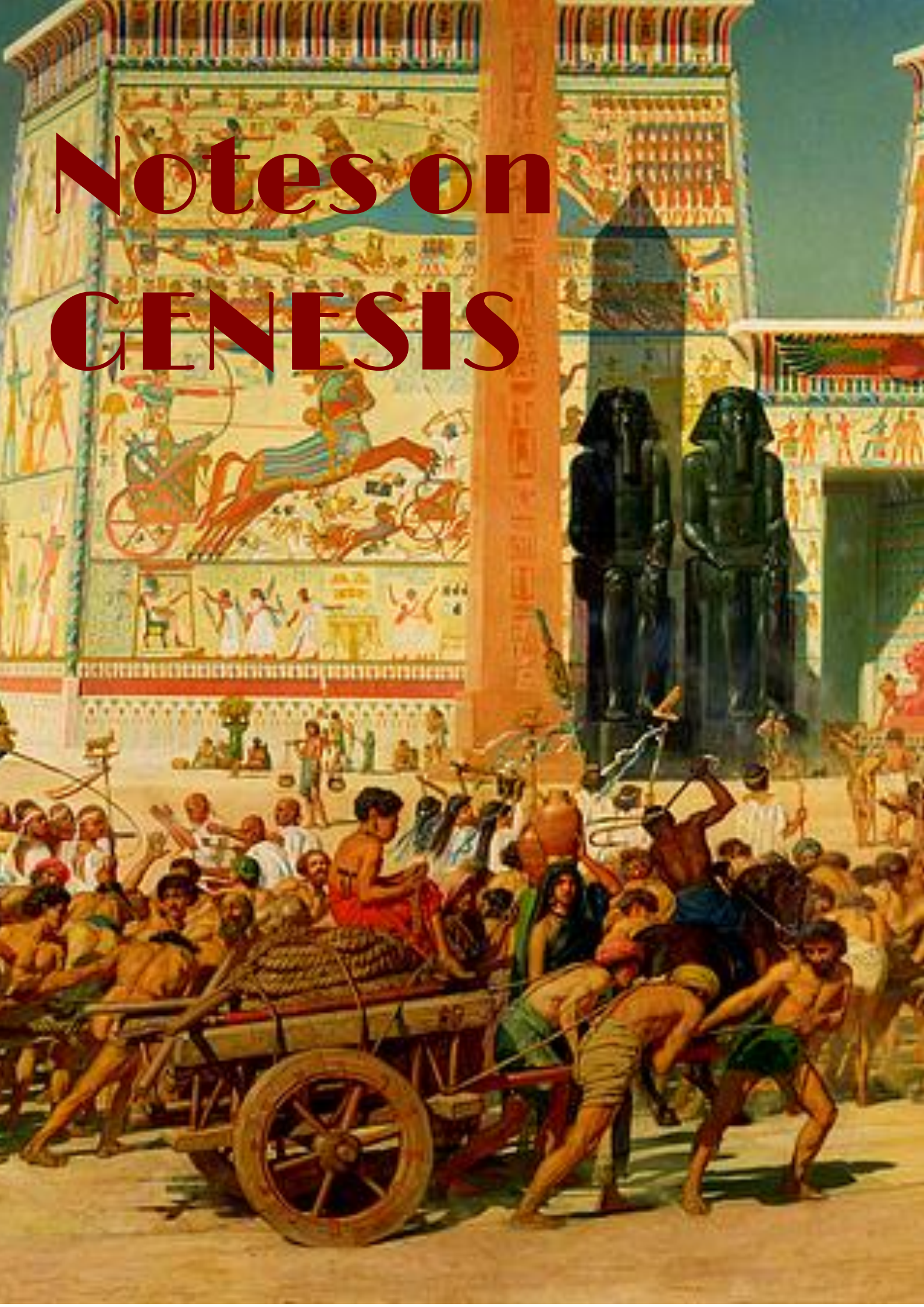


# Notes on GENESIS



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## ***Dedication***

This study was carried out through the years 1993 to 1996.

I hope that it benefited those who attended and those who might receive it in the future. I have gone into more detail in studies conducted since (Christ the Creator...2020) but our doctrinal position is the same.

My grateful thanks to Shelley, my amanuensis and my daughter, for proofing and updating this version, without whose help it would have languished in its original form.

Mike Winnett.

June 26th 2020

*Mike*

*09/05/2020*

Scripture quotations are in ***italic script***. All versions can be found in e-Sword

Blessings upon Rick Meyers for e-Sword <http://www.e-sword.net/> Please send him a contribution if you have not already.

## In Beginning.....

With 7 words containing 28 letters, the Hebrew scripture commences with a profound and as far as many people are concerned, controversial statement.

1. It settles the question of the origin of the Universe (The 'big bang' has it). It has a specific start time.

"In beginning"

2. The Universe is the product of an intelligent being.

"Elohim created"

3. That being is God and transcends creation (He was there before it).

"In beginning Elohim created"

4. God is plural (Eloh**IM**) and by implication a being of more than one person.

Is this then the beginning of time? That depends on how you define time. Does time exist outside of this age in the age to come? That again depends upon how you define time.

Quoting Geerhardus Vos in Hendricksen's 'The Bible and the life hereafter' (p73), he says "Paul nowhere affirms that to the life of man, after the close of this aeon, no more duration, no more divisibility of time-units shall exist. Life so conceived is plainly the prerogative by nature of the Creator: to eternalize the inhabitants of the coming aeon in this sense would be equivalent to deifying them, a thought whose place is in a pagan type of speculation but not within the range of biblical religion". Similarly Dr H Bavinck states "those who have died remain finite and limited beings and cannot exist in any other way than in space and time. The measurement of space and the computation of time, to be sure, will be entirely different on the other side of the grave than they are here, where 'miles and hours' are our standard of measurement. But even the souls that dwell there will not become eternal and omnipresent like God....They are not raised above every form of time, that is, above time in the sense of a succession of moments".

This is basing the definition of time on mere duration or motion. The philosopher Kant taught that neither time nor space existed outside of the boundaries of our sensory perception. The reality we think we see around us exists in our consciousness only; it is imminent within consciousness. Although the "external world", unknown to us (It is a 'Ding an sich' a 'thing as such' existing in itself), may have contributed to this reality within us, the structural formation of the whole is derived from human 'knowing' itself. And to knowing belong both space and time. Thus in response to the assertion that we find time "present" everywhere in creation, Kant would answer, "No wonder, for we ourselves are continually bringing time into that phenomenal world."

The Christian philosopher Dooyeweerd saw time as something that could only be defined by its aspects. In his modal theory, he saw time in various ways. For example, if a person visited a house that they had lived in as a child and nothing had changed, we should say that time had stood still. But which time? Certainly not clock time, rather historical time which manifests itself in the modal sense of cultural development. For a business man "time is money", it is economically qualified. There are other modes in which we may observe time, but I do not intend to enlarge on Dooyeweerd's concepts here (I do recommend that you look into it).

Time then is not an easy concept to explain, but in the generally accepted scientific usage, we might agree with

Henry Morris who summarises *Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* as "The transcendent omnipotent God called into existence the space-mass-time universe". Yet that was not the beginning of God's purpose and of our conception, so we might disagree with Bavinck that we do indeed transcend time, in as much as we existed in the purpose of God before creation.

We were "chosen in Him before the foundation (Gk katabole, throwing down) of the world" (*Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*). This clearly looked beyond redemption to glory, hence "that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love". This was possible because the Lord Christ also was "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world" (*1Pe 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,*). Within the Divinity the counsel of eternity was expressed in love, "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (*Joh 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*) and by "that son of His love" (*Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*) the creation itself was brought about, "***because by Him were created all things, the things in heaven and the things upon earth, the visible and the invisible.....all things have been created by Him and for Him***" (*Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*). We may with the full justification of scripture declare, "In the beginning Christ created the heavens and the earth".

This verse must be grasped, for it is the key to understanding the creation. Creation exists for Christ, who will in time subjugate it to Himself (*1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*) We see man in rebellion to the creator, we see evil often apparently in triumph and justice failing. We see the universe reinterpreted in terms of man and God apparently silent in the face of this blasphemy. How is this consistent with "all things for Him"? This can be understood in part by "the longsuffering of God (*2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*), which certainly will bring sin to account (*2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*) The purpose of God is indeed wonderful.

In addition, the spiritual man will see God's wisdom in creation. As Proverbs notes (*Pro 8:27 When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:*) "When He prepared the heavens I (wisdom) was there....", hence Solomon could observe 3000 proverbs from nature (*1Ki 4:32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 1Ki 4:33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes*). The ant becomes a moral example to the indolent (*Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:* ), animals become an example in holiness as the clean and unclean (Leviticus 11) and the sun and moon become heavenly clocks to regulate worship (*Gen 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from*

*the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:).*

There is nothing capricious or arbitrary in creation, but we are often so taken with the outward that we fail to see the spiritual. The New Heaven and the New Earth will be spiritual and observed as such (Rev 21) because its inhabitants are spiritual beings (*1Co 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 1Co 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 1Co 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. 1Co 15:48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 1Co 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 1Co 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. This is the second Genesis!*

We see then, by turning to the book of Revelation that the Genesis creation was to be of limited duration, ultimately to be destroyed with "elements, burning with heat, shall be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it shall be burnt up" (*2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*). This universe shall "pass away" (*Rev 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand*), not because of gravitational collapse but because of moral judgement (*Rev 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*), the collapse of unrighteousness, by the triumph of the righteousness of God, in Christ Jesus.

### **The State of the Earth.**

The acceptance of direct creation is an article of faith, "by faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God" (*Heb 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*). Any other alternatives to this, such as the 'big bang' and organic evolution over long periods of time are equally articles of faith. Since there were no human observers present at the beginning, there can be no dogmatic assertions as to what took place.

This means that the physicist, the biologist, the palaeontologist, the theologian and so forth all have a particular belief, that cannot readily be proven in the natural world. The Christian is not in a position to prove what happened because he takes it by faith, and here we are talking about Christian faith coming from "hearing" the word of God (*Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*). When you enter that realm of faith you see a consistency with the reality around you, but it cannot be deduced by human reason. It is seen by faith! Incidentally, the Gospel contains creation as a fundamental belief (cf *Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*)

You might think that these "invisible things" (Romans 1 v 20 ff), "clearly seen in the things that have been made" are capable of being seen by all men, but this would imply that all men have some measure of faith in God. However, the context of Romans chapter 1, shows that we are dealing with persons who have known "because God has shown it to them" (*Rom 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.* ) and they are aware of God's "decree" (*Rom 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*). Having been shown the truth, these men suppress it (*Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*) and consequently are given over by God to all manner of debasement (*Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*).

The consequence of rejecting the Creator is that the Creator gives over the creature, such that man becomes like an animal. A powerful example of this is King Nebuchadnezzar who was taught to honour God, by having his reason removed and made to behave as a beast. *Dan 4:28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. Dan 4:29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.*

Cultural decline will be the inevitable outcome of the rejection of God, particularly as the Creator. Again with reference to Daniel and the vision of the kingdoms in the statue of the golden headed man with the feet of clay, the earthly kingdoms to come are inferior. *Dan 2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. Dan 2:32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, Dan 2:33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.* This should remove the idea that man will somehow improve with time!

The creation as an article of faith should be taught and as Henry Morris observed in his book "The God who is Real" it is a primary subject in evangelism (c.f. Paul at Mars Hill in Acts chapter 17).

Moving on to verse 2 of Genesis chapter 1, we are told of the state of this new earth, that it was "without form and void", or as Leupold translates it in his commentary, "and now, as far as the earth was concerned, it was waste and void". There are many interpretations from evangelicals and liberals associated with this verse. There are the expositors of the "gap" theory, which puts a hiatus or gap in time between verse 1 and 2. This theory is in place to accommodate the supposed long ages apparent in the fossil record. The fossil record is not



however a reliable source for dating as there is conflict in the stratification, that is 'higher' species appear lower down! Underlying this "gap" theory is the concept of uniformitarianism or slow process of change. Also it is an attempt to synthesise (and compromise) with so called "science".

A man who is not a Christian is incapable of reasoning correctly, "for since, in the wisdom of God, the world, by wisdom has not known God" (1Co 1:21 *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*). Thus philosophical aspects of his work will be flawed for Christians to try to accommodate flawed reason merely compounds the issue. There are, as we shall see many other explanations for the phenomenon in the creation, but nobody can be absolutely sure until the Lord gives us the true explanation and that for now is not contained in scripture. Even the Christian explanations are philosophical and unprovable.

Another theory implying the gap, translates Genesis chapter 1 verse 2 as "the world **became** without form and void". This interpretation endeavours to accommodate vast ages of time and explain the rebellion in heaven which led to the establishment of the demonic powers of darkness. The translation implies that the creation had been ruined by the rebellion and subsequently "became without form and void".

Our translation of Genesis will depend upon a number of factors amongst which are:

1. Our scientific and philosophical prejudice.
2. The meaning of the Hebrew words (derived from contextual usage) and the text we use.
3. Hebrew or Greek syntax and grammar.
4. Our theological background knowledge (prejudice).

Let us look at the words "form" and "void". The first word (Heb. *tohu* = 'form' A.V.) is rendered variously as:

- Genesis 1:2 *And the earth was without **form**, and void; and darkness[was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*
- Deuteronomy 32:10 *He found him in a desert land, and in the **waste** howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.*
- 1 Samuel 12:21 *And turn ye not aside: for [then should ye go] after vain [things], which cannot profit nor deliver; for they [are] **vain**.*
- Job 6:18 *The paths of their way are turned aside; they go **to nothing**, and perish.*
- Job 12:24 *He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a **wilderness** [where there is] no way.*
- Job 26:7 *He stretcheth out the north over the **empty place**, [and] hangeth the earth upon nothing.*
- Isaiah 49:4 *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.*

The other word (Heb: *bohu* = 'void' A.V.) occurs only in three places:

- Genesis 1:2 *And the earth was without form, and **void**; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*
- Isaiah 34:11 *But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall*

*dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of **emptiness**.*

- Jeremiah 4:23 *I beheld the earth, and, lo, [it was] without form, and **void**; and the heavens, and they [had] no light.*

I would suggest that the sense of the words is "unformed and unfilled", barren and empty. The implication that sin had already entered the temporal creation is impossible and is a wrong view of sin. It is like saying "drink is sinful". Inanimate material objects cannot of themselves be sinful. It is in fact man himself who is sinful, so in the absence of any living souls, the creation cannot be subject to vanity (*Rom 8:20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,*). On the basis of this reasoning any "fall" in heaven should not affect the as yet unpopulated earth. Additionally, there is no warrant in the language for the creation "becoming" unformed and unfilled. The beginning was ready for the specific creation just as the womb is prepared for life.

### **The Working of the Spirit**

The word 'moved' in Peter (*2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Φερομενοι is the same word as used in the LXX version of Genesis (*Gen 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*). The Holy Spirit Himself is the prime mover in true prophecy just as He is in Creation. The word Φερομενοι has come into our modern language as 'pheromone', an attracting hormone and means of corresponding (signalling) between species, implying a vibrant act of communication. Creation as it were is latent under the creative power of God.

In the original Hebrew, the word 'moved' is elsewhere rendered 'shake' (*Jer 23:9 Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.*) and 'fluttering' (*Deu 32:11 As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:*), the Spirit of God as it were brooding upon the yet unfilled Earth, awaiting the word of the Father to commence the creation of natural life forms. We might here draw an interesting parallel with the Gospel of John (*Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*) where we have the doctrine of the new birth. We must be born of water and the Spirit. In the beginning also there was the water and the Spirit from which the creation proceeded.

We might make further comparison between John and Genesis. The Gospel begins in a similar fashion to the creation account "In beginning was the Word... the Word was God...all things were made by Him...in Him was life...life was the light of men". God brings light and life, as Whitfield and Wesley's hymn announces;

Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and Life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.

We cannot underestimate the work of the Holy Spirit in the creation and maintenance of the fabric of the Universe. As the Son proceeds from the Father, so the Spirit proceeds from the Son (*Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*). It is He who regenerates our lives that is, He calls forth life (John 11), renews our minds (Rom 12), that is, He brings light (*Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*) and from that barren new creation brings forth fruit (*Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith*) unto life eternal. These natural and spiritual comparisons will be found in abundance if we look carefully.

It has been observed that if the land mass of planet earth was evenly distributed, the ocean would be about 1.5 miles deep. Indeed the LXX calls the 'deep', abyss (Αβυσσος) in Genesis. Without the presence of light or the heat of the sun, the water does not become ice! The brooding Spirit must give His heat to the surface.

The whole design of the earth is magnificent. The axis tilted at 23 degrees, enables the precession of the seasons, which in turn effectively doubles the effective growing area of the planet, rather than allowing narrow temperate bands near the tropics. The speed of rotation generates a gravitational force sufficient to retain the atmosphere, but not too slow to create days of exceptional length and long cold nights. The sun is placed so that the earth neither freezes nor roasts as do other planets in the system. 40 miles above us exists a filter called the ozone layer, a trinity of oxygen atoms (O<sub>3</sub>), which protects us from the killer radiation from the sun. There are many other features of this precarious little system that makes up our home, but we as believers are secure because underneath are the everlasting arms.

The darkness on the face of the deep awaited the light of God, yet even darkness is the secret place of God (*Psa 18:11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.*). As David was aware, it was the Lord who would "lighten my darkness" (*2Sa 22:29 For thou art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.*). "And God said let there be light: and there was light" (*Gen 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*).

When we use the term 'light' we usually mean that portion of the electro-magnetic spectrum that our eyes are sensitive to but in a wider sense we may speak of UV light and infra-red light. There are creatures that can 'see' these lights that we cannot. With appropriate detectors, we can sense a whole range of wavelengths unknown to our normal senses, yet all of these 'lights' are visible to our creator, the Father of lights. Reality is in fact larger than our senses and even "things which are seen were not made of things which appear" (*Heb 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*).

The light that God brings into being is not dependent upon the luminaries which were created later on the fourth day. It is peculiarly a Divine light. This is the light that lights the New Jerusalem (*Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*) and it is called the 'glory' of God. We might consider that God summoned forth His Glory. Moses requests a glimpse of God's glory (*Exo 33:18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.*), yet this would have spelt death (*Exo 33:20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.*), for to view the glory is to view the face of God, and so God covers him.

These thoughts are brought together in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 4:6 *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*) where the same command has been uttered in our hearts, and where it brings forth "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God". Why are we not destroyed by this? I think it is because we are covered by Christ who is our covering or mercy-seat (Rom 3:25 *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*). The heavenly light is already burning within us.

### **"Let there be Light!"**

The light was brought into being before the light bearers and that source of all light is the Lord Himself, who is in scripture called "**The Father of lights** (Φωτῶν)" (Jas 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*), which we might transliterate "The Father of photons". There is in God such consistency in the character of God that He illuminates with the same intensity in all directions, such that there is no shadow of turning.

Light (Heb. *aor* whence Urim) symbolised the goodness and glory of God is separated from darkness symbolising death, ignorance and sorrow. In terms of the property of matter, light is the retransmission of energy, giving out if you will, and darkness is the absorption of energy. *Psa 107:10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; Isa 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Pro 2:13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Zep 1:15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness/*

Light has therefore always been the portion of God's people and it has always been His pleasure to Guide them by that Divine light. *Isa 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Isa 42:6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; Isa 2:5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. Psa 97:11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Psa 119:105 NUN. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:*

"If we walk in the Light" as John says (1Jn 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*), "as He is in the Light" we have both sanctification and fellowship. The idea that you can have fellowship (κοινωνία), or sharing in the things of God while walking in darkness is not scriptural.

This truth was taught during the Exodus, where God went before the people in their wanderings (*Exo 13:21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:*). Walking in the light was not merely bathing in the light, as it were like lying on a beach. This light was in motion and if you didn't go with the light you would be left in the dark, hence if "**we walk**" in the light. Walking is an activity of pursuit. If you don't walk the walk, don't talk the talk.

Also, that which was light for some was darkness for others (*Exo 14:20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.*), so we rightly may talk about "seeing the light" as Paul did on the Damascus road, when God reveals His Son in us. During the Plagues of Egypt there was a time when darkness was over the land, but in the houses of Israel there was light (*Exo 10:23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*). Such was the Divine light, the glory of God, yet far from being an eerie and frightening experience, I imagine it was a great comfort in affliction and a morale booster. Here was God Himself giving the light of His Countenance (*Psa 89:15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*) to enable His people to go about their business. How sad that they forgot this peculiar honour, one which was to typify heaven itself (Rev 21).

It may be that the faces of the people also shone as Moses did (*Exo 34:29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. Exo 34:30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. Exo 34:31 And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. Exo 34:32 And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. Exo 34:33 And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. Exo 34:34 But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. Exo 34:35 And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.*). The glory of God having burned into his very being such that he covered himself so that they could not look upon that which was to be abolished (*2Co 3:13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:*).

Seeing in this action, something worthy of imitation, the Jewish men cover their heads in prayer, which was not commanded and is in fact dishonouring (*1Co 11:4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.*). However, if the glory accorded to Moses and Elijah is given to the people of God, we shall all glow in glory (*Luke 9:31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Rev 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*).

The first day of creation then, starts in darkness and ends in light, hence "the evening and the morning were



the first day" (*Gen 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*). It is perhaps because of this that the Jewish people reckon the start of their day from the evening (*Lev 23:32 It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath. Joh 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*). It is also seen that those who were ritually unclean remained so until sunset whence they could return to the camp on a new day (*Deu 23:11 But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again.*).

Perhaps there is a lesson in the way that we divide our time. For the natural man he works towards the night, but the children of God work toward the day! "You have called us out of darkness into your marvellous light".

How are we to take these days of creation, as literal 24 hours or vast ages? The word day (Heb. *Yom* day) can mean even the daylight period (*Gen 1 v 5*) as opposed to the darkness called night. Having finished creating the Lord then uses the formula "the evening and the morning" as defining the day (*Gen 1 v 5*). The duration of the days of creation are the same. The cyclic arrangement of days is established and can only be that of the solar day. In the Old Testament day is not used to mean 'period' but a span of 24 hours. The term 'day' then, means either the period of daylight or the 24 hour duration of the light and dark.

The Decalogue justifies the Sabbath on the grounds that God Himself rested on the seventh day, for in six days were the works of creation undertaken. This weekly Sabbath is meaningful only in the light of a 24 hour day.

### The Firmament

The word Firmament (Heb. *raqya*) comes from a root meaning to beat or stamp with the feet, broad, spread and stretch so then the Firmament is something expanded. Our word coming from the Latin Vulgate 'firmamentum' meaning something firmly put in place, and the LXX στερεωμα, conveying the same idea do not quite match it. *Exo 39:3 And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, with cunning work. Num 16:39 And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: ..... Job 37:18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking glass?..... Psa 136:6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

We are dealing with something that is stretched out and functions as a divider between the waters above and the waters below and so would best describe the atmospheric expanse over the surface of the seas. Above this atmosphere existed a water blanket or canopy, 'the waters above'. This water canopy would have acted as a 'greenhouse', yet far from being destructive it would according to Henry Morris have provided a stable and quiet environment to live in, coupled with the added advantage of filtering the harmful rays of the sun.

The firmament is called heaven (Heb. *shamayim*) *Gen 1:8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.* Our English word being derived from the root "to heave" or

lift up. There are three heavens mentioned in scripture.

- The atmospheric heaven where the birds fly. *Jer 4:25 I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.*
- The sidereal heavens, that is space. *Isa 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.*
- The dwelling place of God that is glory. *Heb 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:*

Is this Paul's third heaven? *2Co 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.* The term 'Firmament' is used in the same way,

- The atmosphere. *Gen 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.*
- Space. *Gen 1:17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,*
- God's throne. *Eze 1:22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.*

So we can see that there is a firmament, an expanse, or space corresponding to the various regions called earth, space and heaven. What might this signify? We note that there was no rain before the Noachian flood (*Gen 2:5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. Gen 2:6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.*) and the earth was watered by a mist that rose and condensed in a daily cycle. This cycle was broken at the time of the flood (*Gen 7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*) when God judged the earth (*Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. Gen 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. Gen 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*).

That judgement was carried out by the force of water, the waters above and the waters below, the wrath of God being revealed from heaven (*Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*) as it were. Hence, in some measure, the firmament formed a barrier against judgement that separated us from the wrath of God. There are of course other waters that give us life (*Rev 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*).

This may mirror the second stage (second day) in our regeneration. Firstly (first day), we see the light and it is separated from the darkness within us, secondly, judgement is removed (*Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*) and being justified by faith we have peace with God (*Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*). If a man does not believe on the Christ, he does not have the light of God in him and in consequence the wrath of God abides over him (*Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*) and he can have no peace.

In the highest sense then we may view the Firmament as a type of Christ who act as a covering or propitiation (*Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*). He is the expanse between us and God. The law was below the mercyseat and God Himself dwelt above it. Christ is both a shield to the law (*1Sa 6:19 And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.*) and a shield to God (*1Jn 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*).

We have seen that the firmament is also called heaven, and again in a type Christ is heaven for us. When Christ enters us so too does heaven itself for we are seated 'in' Christ 'in' the heavenlies (*Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*).

### First Fruits.

On the third day we see the waters gathered together such that the 'dry' (Heb. Yabash) can appear. You will see in some versions the word 'land' is in parenthesis and that is because it is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied to give the sense. Here we have the separation between the wet and the dry, the wet being called 'seas' and the dry is called 'earth' (Heb. eretz) (*Gen 1:10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.*).

The word 'gathered' (Heb qava) comes from the root meaning to twist or bind, hence to be strong or confident, whence to be joined or collected. This word is also used in Jeremiah (*Jer 17:13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.*) for the word 'hope', since hope is derived from 'confidence'.

It can be seen that God created the plant life before the animal life, the food before the creature, yet so many plants are in a symbiotic relationship with insects. That means that the plants need the insects and the insects need the plants. The insects emerge at the time that their food plant needs to be pollinated and so they ensure the survival of each other. The idea that vast ages separate the emergence of plants and insects undermines this principle, yet the Bible shows us that all things were created very much closer in time WITHIN A WEEK!

Following our typological course in the creation we may observe the following, that here are the first 'life' forms on Earth, each carrying their own genetic material and reproductive pattern. Here are the 'firstfruits' of scripture. Again by this we are drawn to consider Christ 'the firstfruit' (*1Co 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*).

It is Christ who has given us the firstfruits of the Spirit (*Rom 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*) and we ourselves in turn become the firstfruits to God (*Rev 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.*).

In the Old Testament there was a feast of the first fruits (*Exo 34:22 And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. Lev 23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: Lev 23:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.*). It was celebrated on the first Sabbath after the Passover, which in the case of Our Lord would have been the day of the resurrection, the 'third day' after the crucifixion (*Jos 5:10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. Jos 5:11 And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. Jos 5:12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*).

The first Passover and feast of the Unleavened bread were held in the land of Egypt but the feast of the Firstfruits had to wait until the people had crossed both the Red sea and the Jordan after God had twice more gathered the waters together and made the dry land appear so that the people could cross in safety. The long delay between these two events you will recall was caused by the unbelief of those who 'spied out' the land.

The firstfruits remind us that God always has the first bite, before ourselves (*Lev 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.*) and he must be honoured first (here is a good reason for thanksgiving at mealtimes). It was a taste of the great harvest to follow (*1Co 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*) thus Christ is the Passover lamb **and** the Sheaf of the First fruits.

It was appropriate that Christ was 'not touched' before he had ascended to His Father (*Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God*), and here we have the image of Christ being lifted before the Lord (*Lev 23:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.*), just as we in turn will be gathered home

'bringing in the sheaves'.

The idea of fruit also reminds us that we are to bring forth fruit and that abundantly (*Joh 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Joh 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*). In Galatians (*Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith*) this is called the fruit of the Spirit and is the product of God indwelling in us in love. In line with our creation days we recall:

- Firstly (first day), we see the light separated from the darkness within us,
- Secondly (second day), judgement is removed (*Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*) and being justified by faith we have peace with God (*Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*).
- Thirdly (third day), we become fruitful.

We may consider further, the typology associated with the 'third day'. It was on the third day that Abraham saw the place he was to sacrifice Isaac (*Gen 22:4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.*). It was on the third day that God came down from Sinai (*Exo 19:11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. Exo 19:12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: Exo 19:13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. Exo 19:14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. Exo 19:15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.*) and delivered the Law on stones to the people of Israel (*Ex 20*). What a contrast here between the third day of Christ (*Luk 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:*) and the third day of Moses!

The third day was the commencement of purification for touching the dead (*Num 19:11 He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. Num 19:12 He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean*) perhaps answering to our progressive sanctification in Christ which is completed on the Seventh day (the sabbatism of God, *Heb 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*). The third day also there was a wedding at Cana of Galilee (**The Wedding at Cana** *Joh 2:1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:*) marking the first miracle of Jesus!

But the greatest third day as we have said is that day of the resurrection (*1Co 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*), just as the land in Genesis was raised to provide the platform for life, so Christ is the basis of our life.



## Signs and Times

The creation of the light bearers occurs some four days after the creation of light and so we see that the primary source of all light is Elohim.

Evolutionists argue that because of the vast distances to other galaxies, based on a recent creation of some 10,000 years ago, light from distant stars should not be reaching us. Also events such as supernovas would have had no basis in reality. The evolutionist view is based upon the following presumptions:

- Light has always had a constant velocity (there is evidence that it is slowing down, so that light could have reached 'quicker' in the past).
- That God did not create the universe with apparent age (He created man with age).

In the expanse of space God places two special lights, as yet unnamed in scripture. The sun (Heb. shemesh, whence Samson) does not get mentioned by **name** until Genesis (*Gen 15:12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.*) and then in the context of a covenant that embraces Christ, and the moon (Heb. yarech) until Genesis chapter 37 (*Gen 37:9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*) and there in a typical association.

The "lights" have a number of purposes:

- They divide day from night (*Gen 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:*)
- They are for "signs"
- They are for "seasons"
- They are for days and years.

The word "sign" is translated "mark" for the mark of Cain (*Gen 4:15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.* ), and "token" for the token of the covenant (*Gen 9:12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:*) where it is a rainbow. Circumcision is a sign or token in the flesh (*Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*) and for a sign or plague against disobedience (*Exo 4:8 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.*). It betokens a smear of blood on the houses of the Israelites (*Exo 12:13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.*) and suggested the phylactery as a token of continual remembrance of Gods' word (*Exo 13:9 And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.* Deu 11:18 *Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in*

*your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.*). Outward obedience to the Sabbath (*Exo 31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.*) became in turn a sign between God and man, just as Aaron's rod was a sign against the murmurers (*Num 17:10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.*).

We might suggest from the examples quoted above, that the "mark" of Cain was indeed an outward signal in his flesh, perhaps warning men that they touched him at their peril. Since men were created with the ability to converse, it may also have been so that they had the ability to write and read. The mark of Cain may have been a word of God in his flesh! The concept of signs in the heavens has come down to us in the word disaster, a 'bad star'.

The sun and moon appear as signs in the history of redemption. The sun standing still, during the long day of Joshua (*Jos 10:12 Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.*), going back ten degrees in the time of Isaiah (*Isa 38:8 Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.*). It is also a sign of the second coming (*Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: Luk 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;*). The mention at Pentecost (*Act 2:20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come*) may refer to the end of time rather than the first century.

The word translated "seasons" could better be rendered "appointed times" and is also used for "congregation" and "set time". This implies that they are involved in the regulation of worship.

The word "season" is variously rendered as follows. In Genesis (*Gen 17:21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.*) it is a 'set time' for a visit from the Lord, in Exodus (*Exo 13:10 Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.*) it is the 'season' of the Feast of Unleavened bread' or 'the time appointed' (*Exo 23:15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)*). The word is also translated 'congregation' in Exodus (27 v 21 cf 28 v 43). The new moon was a marker (*2Ki 4:23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor Sabbath. And she said, It shall be well*) signifying the start of the month (mooneth) from which we can calculate Christ's death on Nisan 14 occurring on a full moon.

The lights therefore, serve the purpose of celestial chronometers, by which man can measure his life, omens and regulators of his worship. This implies that God was concerned with regularity and order in the lives of

men. This was a particular distinctive of those under law, giving the nation of Israel a uniqueness and cohesiveness in the face of the surrounding heathen. The apostasies that occur show that the **emblems become the objects** of worship (*Deu 4:19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. 2Ki 23:5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven*). This you recall happened with the bronze serpent (*Num 21:9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. Ki 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.*).

This is a common failing among men who fail to see the reality with the eye of faith and are left mere observers of the outward as though that of itself is of value. (Examples: Crucifixes, statues, relics, Sabbaths, new moons, bread and wine etc.)

As with the other days of creation we see a typical significance in the objects created, particularly the sun. It signifies the Christ (*Isa 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.* ), who is also called the sun of righteousness (*Mal 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.* ) and by its brightness and purity speaks of righteousness. The tribe of Judah awaited 'great David's greater son' as it camped to the East or the place of the sun rise. It was then fitting that the sun should lower its light at the death of Christ (*Luk 23:45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.*), the dimming of the type.

The sun also marked the point of ritual cleansing (*Deu 16:6 But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. Deu 23:11 But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again. Lev 22:7 And when the sun is down, he shall be clean, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it is his food.*) perhaps signifying the death of Christ in the crimson sunset, atoning for sin.

How then might we view this fourth day as part of the analogy of redemption? Remember so far:

- Firstly (first day), we see the light separated from the darkness within us,
- Secondly (second day), judgement is removed (*Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* ) and being justified by faith we have peace with God (*Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*).
- Thirdly (third day), we become fruitful.

The product of a fruitful life is that Christ is formed in us (*Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,*) and this is the goal of the Christian ministry (*Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*). The light of God in us must take form, and burn as the sun in our lives.

### The Creation of Life.

*Gen 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. Gen 1:21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. Gen 1:22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. Gen 1:23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.*

Here we have the first carbon life forms (designated souls v 20) to appear on the face of the earth. The word swarm (Heb; sharatz) is a mimetic word akin to our 'scratch', and gives us an impression of a huge hive of created activity scrabbling for space on the sea and in the sky. Abundant life is what we see in the swarming seas.

Among these creatures were the 'tannin' sometimes rendered 'dragon' (*Deu 32:33 Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Psa 148:7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:*). Whether these were the dinosaurs or not cannot be known for certain. I always like to point out, when we philosophise about the past, that there was an apparent age to all that was formed. Whether the remains of many creatures that we find actually existed is something that cannot be proven. We must always be careful when we speculate because there are many gaps in our knowledge and God Himself will confound worldly wisdom (*1Co 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*). You must decide for yourself what is worldly wisdom and humanistic thought!

We see from biblical usage that 'swarm' applies to birds, fish, lizards and insects (*Lev 11:20 All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you. Lev 11:29 These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind, Lev 11:30 And the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole*). In these creatures we foreshadow the principles of holiness and cleanliness (*Lev 11 v 1ff*). This shows us that the creation was designed with a higher functionality, a spiritual dimension, if you will, that would escape the outward eyes of ordinary men. The shapes of the legs, the skin, the joints and the gait have a purpose in everyday life, but they were for a period, an object lesson in righteousness and obedience. The creatures to be sure were 'good' since they proceeded from the Hand of God, but they could become objects of uncleanness to men if God so willed that they were to be separated for that purpose. *Gen 1:21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.*

In Acts Peter, a natural Jew, was clearly averse to eating just anything. The ritual laws of cleanliness in which he had been brought up, had so burned into his conscience, that he had no hesitation in refusing the command (Act 10:10 *And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, Act 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Act 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. Act 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.* ). The lesson that Peter was being taught, was that God in Christ had cleansed all things, including the gentiles (see Act 10:28 *And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*).

The lesson that the animals were really teaching was about the nature of man himself! If you want a general principle by which to identify ritually 'clean' or 'unclean' animals you will I suggest, find it in the comparison with man himself. The unclean creatures have the characteristics of man (i.e. unclean feeders, skin between the joints, smooth skins etc.) and the clean creatures are dissimilar to man.

These creatures will also have other uses in the world that is coming to life, for they will be sacrifices and offerings. This teaches us another great truth which is summed up in what theologians call the Doctrine of Supralapsarianism. This Doctrine states that the Fall of mankind, that is the entrance of sin and suffering was foreordained before the creation of the world. Before evil had entered our world, before Adam sinned, the teaching of holiness and uncleanness was built into the system.

#### The basic order of INFRA/SUPRA-Lapsarianism

	INFRA	SUPRA
1	Creation	Election
2	Permit fall	Creation
3	Election	Permit Fall
4	Provision of Redeemer	Christ to the Elect
5	Send the Spirit	Spirit to apply Christ
	<b>ELECTION FOLLOWS THE FALL</b>	<b>ELECTION PRECEDES THE FALL</b>

Many find this an anathema because they imply that it makes God the author of sin. It is certainly true that God creates evil (*Isa 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*) but sin by definition cannot reside in the nature of God because He can never deny His nature. Sin by definition is lawlessness (*1Jn 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*) and that comes about because man sets himself in opposition to God. In the purpose of God we see that He planned redemption and it lay embryonic in the creation.

Thus we see Christ the lamb slain before the foundation of the world (*Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*). Thus the fifth day draws to a close, now with the sounds of insects and birds singing



their first evening chorus as the sun slowly moves to the horizon, giving way to those creatures who had been given special characteristics to enable them to function in conditions of darkness. It was as God observed GOOD!

We have suggested that there are some spiritual analogies between the Natural Creation and the Spiritual Creation. If we look at this fifth day in a spiritual way, we might suggest that it speaks of sanctification and holiness, or at least the beginning of it, in the provision of the sacrifices for cleansing and the teaching of personal holiness.

### The Creation of Man.

*Gen 1:24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. Gen 1:25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

In Genesis we see the creation completed in **six** days and man as it were the pinnacle of the work. I say this because man is made:

- In the image of God (v26),
- After the likeness of God (v26).

It is also recorded "let **US** make man" (v26) and "God created Man in **HIS** image" (v27), implying the unity and plurality of the Godhead, One God three Persons, yet this doctrine is not clearly defined until the New Testament.

We turn to Genesis chapter 2 (*Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*) to see the details of the creation of man, in fact nothing else is described in such detail during the six days. We observe that Man (Adam meaning 'ruddy') was made of the dust (Heb: aphar dust, as powdered or grey, hence clay), out of the earth (*1Co 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.*). We may pause to ask the question, "what is the difference between a living body and a lifeless body?" Chemically they are the same, being composed of some 60% to 70% of water, which when reduced to its basic chemical ash or dust, composed of carbon, iron, calcium etc, will fill a small jar. A dead body weighs the same as a living body, so a soul cannot be weighed. I believe that there is still a large monetary prize in America, for the first person that can show the existence of a human soul.

Yet there is a vast difference between a living and a dead person! That I believe is because the very essence of life itself is distilled from the breath of God. Life is a Divine gift to the creature, breathed from God. It is given to each creature and it is taken back from each creature (*Ecc 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*). Men will never be able to create life because of this, though they may process the chemical elements. All we have seen in science is the manipulation of living tissue, life from life.

Woman is the last act of creation (*Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*), created because the Lord saw that man had no suitable 'helpmeet' or counterpart in the animal creation. This act shows that the male is not complete without a female, and the bible teaches that singleness is a special gift (*Mat 19:12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*) therefore men should seek wives to find their own wholeness. Perhaps this unity and plurality is a further reflection of the Divine image.

Unlike the rest of creation, God creates a single pair of the human species and within this pair is the whole genetic programme for the human race, for all colours and creeds. Why only two? This again brings home the Supralapsarian position for the fall had to occur with the first pair, since they are the heads of the species. If there were multiple families, redemption would require multiple saviours. As in Adam all die so in Christ are all made alive (*1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*).

We observed earlier that man was made in God's image but just what is this image? Augustine made an arbitrary distinction between the image and the likeness of God. He stated that :

Image = Knowledge of truth  
Likeness = Love of virtue.

However, it paved the way for the catholic doctrine that man is naturally good, but with the additional gift of the likeness of God, he is able to seek the higher spiritual things of God. By this definition, man could lose the image of God and still be naturally good. Original righteousness under this system was a bridle to the lower nature. At the fall, the supernatural was removed, but mans real nature was only slightly affected hence he was still capable of doing good. Sin and grace was gradually becoming nature and grace.

At the Reformation, the reformers began to question the nature of the image of God, and even they were divided. For them a major problem was whether;

Sin = Pollution or Guilt? and consequently if;  
Grace = Sanctification or Pardoning?

If sin had not completely lost the image of God in the fall, then he didn't need pardoning, he only needed sanctifying. Ulrich Zwingli considered that the sanctifying influences of God penetrated the world accounting for the 'good' in the unsaved.

This problem still remained unresolved until the current century, receiving fair attention from the Dutchmen Kuyper and Hoeksema. I find it difficult to reconcile the various theological positions with the scripture. There is still the idea of the image of God in the WIDER and NARROWER sense. To the former is attributed mans rationality, morality and so called immortality. To the latter is his true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness.

The former distinguishes man from the animals, the latter his original state of righteousness. The latter was lost in the fall, the former is retained. Man thus is considered to retain the image of God in the wider sense.

What does the scripture teach? The image of God (*1Co 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.*) is specifically his masculinity. It is there the males created precedence or rank. Yet it is also true that man and woman together are made in the image of God (*Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*), a plural image.

The true image of God is of course, Jesus Christ, (*2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*), thus in Jesus are combined his maleness and Divine image which is shared by both man and woman. This 'sexless' image is one of moral qualities (*Eph 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*). From the New Testament, we would say that the image of god in the narrower sense applies to the maleness in the created hierarchy and the moral character in the wider sense. To make any other distinctions from scripture is quite difficult. We shall see later how this image is affected by the fall.

### **Be Fruitful and Multiply.**

Man was created to reproduce and dominate the creation as God's vice-gerant (*Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Gen 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.*). It might be argued that this blessing and its implied command to action was given before the entrance of sin and the fall of mankind and is therefore no longer of value, but it is reiterated after the Noachian flood (*Gen 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. Gen 9:2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.* ).

The former is termed by some "the Dominion Covenant" and the latter "the Ecological Covenant".

Man is clearly the steward of God's creation and as such is responsible for his use or abuse of it. The Mosaic

code carries warnings about abuse and overuse of the earth's resources *Deu 20:19 When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege.*

**Deforestation,** *Deu 22:6 If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:*

**Over culling** or *Deu 23:24 When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.*

**Over harvesting for personal profit, greed,** *Deu 24:19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.*

**Provision for the needy,** *Deu 25:4 Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.*

**Kindness to animals.** It is true that there are spiritual truths underlying these laws (compare Deut 25 v 4 with *1Co 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 1Co 9:10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 1Co 9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* ), but these merely extend the principle and the application.

The planet Earth has limited resources, with the primary energy source being the Sun, which provides the power for renewal over the seasons and drives the 'weather machine'. Some resources are renewable, such as farm produce, others are destroyed and lost in the process of decay, such as rusting cars or burning, such as fossil fuels. Greed or poor management may yield a short term profit but a long term disaster for local populations or even the World community (e.g. the effects of the deforestation of the Amazon).

How should Christians manage industry? Would we have longer term objectives? Would we encourage people to have better quality goods and keep them longer (destroy the concept of built in obsolescence)? Would fashion govern our use of resources? How would this affect tax structure, economic policy and welfare? Where would we direct our scientific research and development? The answer to these questions will be found in the systematic study of scripture and through Divine revelation. Any course of action contrary to the basic principles of godliness would be rejected.

Do Christians under the New Covenant still have a duty to the creation, since the Mosaic code is no longer obligatory? We must firstly observe that the words of Genesis chapter 1 (vv 28 - 29) are given before the law of Moses. Secondly, that the law of Moses is in some measure a concession to the fallen nature (*Mat 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*) and the principles established at Creation are of a higher order. The

justification for hair coverings also resides in the created order, not the law of Moses. There is then no reason to reject this creation ordinance to be fruitful and multiply and exercise dominion.

The creation according to Paul (*Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*) also has an expectation of redemption, "the liberty of the glory of the children of God". God's creatures are still important. This attitude however, would not be acceptable to the Roman catholic church.

You will be aware that animal cruelty is a part of the culture of notionally catholic countries, such as Spain, where bull fighting is a regular feature. I am not suggesting that our own country is devoid of cruelty (such as fox hunting) it is not, but it has not the same degree of cultural acceptance. Catholic countries, because they view animals as brute beasts, without souls, they consider them little different to blocks of wood.

Proverbs (*Pro 12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*) Creatures are sensitive and for this reason man should exercise kindness towards them. The principles of the RSPCA have biblical support.

"Concern" is a mark of a **righteous** man and I think that it is only the righteous that will be able to exercise proper dominion, because they are functioning under the rule of God, not their own ideas and philosophy. Creation will function in harmony with the will of God, but will bring forth thorns and thistles against unrighteousness.

### **The Limits of Fruitfulness.**

Are the words of Genesis 1 to be taken without qualification? *Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.* What would happen if we took the following without qualification; "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex 20 v 13) or "eye for eye" (Ex 21 v 24)? Our method has always been to examine what the scriptures say as a whole about an issue and deduce from that the limits of application.

Fruitfulness is a blessing, but we may consider that there are occasions when it is neither possible nor perhaps even impractical. Although there is a causal connection between sexual intercourse and pregnancy, the outcome is not inevitable neither can parents ensure the outcome. There is a general acknowledgement in the Old Testament that conception is of the Lord (*Gen 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.*). Sarah is made barren for a season (*Gen 16:2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.*) but the Lord releases her (*Gen 17:19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.*), Leah has her "womb opened" (*Gen 29:31 And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.*) as did Rachel (*Gen 30:22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.*).

For Ruth, the Lord gave her conception (*Rth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.*). The forming of the foetus is the work of God (*Psa 139:13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. Psa 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. Psa 139:15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Psa 139:16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. Psa 139:17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! Psa 139:18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.*) even down to the what we would call deformity or deficiency (*Exo 4:11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?* ).

The inevitable issue of contraception faces the Christian and it is questioned in the light of the sixth command ("thou shalt not kill"). Methods for preventing offspring in the Old Testament are as follows:

- Abortion
- Sterilisation
- Infanticide
- Continence
- Withdrawal

Let us consider these. Spontaneous abortion is mentioned in Exodus (*Exo 21:22 If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. Exo 21:23 And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,*) the result of a brawl. The precipitation of the child was a serious offence with a recompense required. If the child died, then the penalty was death (*Exo 21:24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,* ) under the lex talionis. This confirms that the child in the womb is regarded as a soul and an identifiable individual (see *Psa 139:13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*). Further it would imply that any agent or agency bringing about abortion would be regarded as 'unlawful taking of life'.

Intrauterine devices, such as the copper coil, do not inhibit fertilisation, they inhibit the foetal cells from implanting. This presents a problem, since viability (the ability of the foetus to survive outside of the womb independently of the mother) is not a prerequisite for legal protection (Ex 21 v 24). If we regard the foetus as a whole person at fertilisation, that is, where the components from both parents are joined, then intrauterine devices are abortifacients and are to be condemned. The question as to when life starts is the key question for methods of contraception.

In Genesis (*Gen 38:7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. Gen 38:8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. Gen 38:9 And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in*

unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.) the subject of ***coitus interruptus***, or the withdrawal method is seen for the first time. It is also called "Onanism" after the perpetrator of the act who was subsequently killed.

Roman Catholics reject birth control on the basis of this scripture, however, the seminal emission is not of itself a capital offence (*Lev 15:16 And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even. Lev 15:17 And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the seed of copulation, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the even. Lev 15:18 The woman also with whom man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even, see also Lev 20:10 And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. Lev 20:11 And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. Lev 20:12 And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. Lev 20:13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. Lev 20:14 And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. Lev 20:15 And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. Lev 20:16 And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. Lev 20:17 And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. Lev 20:18 And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. Lev 20:19 And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister: for he uncovereth his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity. Lev 20:20 And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. Lev 20:21 And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.*

Onan's crime was that he did not fulfil the role required by the 'Levirate' (Latin levir = brother) where the brother had a duty to provide for his brother's widow and to preserve the name of the deceased (*Deu 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. Deu 25:6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. Deu 25:7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Deu 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Deu 25:9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. Deu 25:10 And his name*



*shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.*). Ruth and Boaz are an example of this duty, which incidentally preserved the line of David and thus Christ Jesus.

Onan acted perversely by selfishly abusing Tamar's trust, he physically used and abused her. The punishment under the Mosaic code was to have your shoe removed and be spat at in the face before the elders, not death. This implies that Onan's crime was more deep rooted. If 'withdrawal' is wrong, then condoms are equally wrong because they achieve the same practical end.

Continence or self-imposed abstinence is not an individual option. There are no grounds for unilateral withdrawal from sexual activity (*Exo 21:10 If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. 1Co 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*), sexual blackmail is sinful. Abstinence was a ceremonial requirement during menstruation, after childbirth, or for religious reasons.

- *Lev 15:19 And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. Lev 15:20 And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. Lev 15:21 And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. Lev 15:22 And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. Lev 15:23 And if it be on her bed, or on any thing whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even. Lev 15:24 And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean. Lev 15:25 And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean. Lev 15:26 Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the bed of her separation: and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation. Lev 15:27 And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. Lev 15:28 But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean.*

- *Lev 12:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Lev 12:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. Lev 12:3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Lev 12:4 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. Lev 12:5 But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days. Lev 12:6 And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: Lev 12:7 Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed*

*from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. Lev 12:8 And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.*

- *Exo 19:15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.*

Infanticide although known to Israel was not condoned and child sacrifice or killing was forbidden (Lev 18:21 *And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.*) and punishable with death (Lev 20:2 *Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones.*).

### **The Limits of Fruitfulness...cont.**

We considered last time, some of the measures available for the control of human life in the Old Testament. We now look at the subject from the New Testament perspective. The New Testament confirms the validity of Old Testament prohibitions with regard to human sexual relationships. The marriage bond is the normative sexual relationship, unity of man and wife is (should be) the visible expression of the unity of Christ and the church.

- *Mar 10:6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. Mar 10:7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; Mar 10:8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. Mar 10:9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*
- *1Co 6:16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*
- *Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

Illegitimate sexual relationships are condemned. This is placed among other evils that exclude men from heaven.

- *Mat 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Mar 10:11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. Mar 10:19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 1Co 6:13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.*
- *Mar 7:20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. Rom 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

- *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.*

Apart from these statements on sexuality, there are no relevant remarks relating to the subject of birth control in the New Testament! The sanctity of life is however confirmed in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus. *Luk 1:39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; Luk 1:40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. Luk 1:41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: Luk 1:42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

Having though established the sanctity of life after conception and rejected abortion as murder, we are faced with many moral dilemmas as our technology advances in the understanding and manipulation of life. Should we make exceptions for rape victims? Should we allow abortion for Down's syndrome foetus? Should we allow genetic screening?

For example, if parents were aware of genetic defects, sickle cell, or haemophilia, should they abstain from having children? This is moving into the realm of eugenics, a subject as ancient as Plato and propounded in America in the 1920's with particular reference to the Negroid population. It reached its grossest form under the German National Socialists (Nazis), with the removal from society of racial minorities and defectives, culminating in the pure race breeding of the Arian characteristics of the 'master race'.

The ability to predict disease by genetic screening will open the door to selection of particular traits. Genetic manipulation and cloning will lead to the "designer baby". You could possibly reproduce yourself, right down to eye and hair colour!

Of course, we might argue that giving "nature" a hand in the selection process is perfectly acceptable. The line that we draw may be very fine and we each answer to God for our actions.

Similarly, should we have a policy of population control? In China, the government announced in late 2015 a reversion back to a two-child limit. The policy also allowed exceptions for some other groups, including ethnic minorities. Thus, the term "one-child policy" has been called a "misnomer", because for nearly 30 of the 36 years that it existed (1979–2015), about half of all parents in China were allowed to have a second child. The argument being that there are insufficient resources to support the world's population, but with proper management and distribution, the land mass of the USA could produce enough food for the whole world!

The subject of infertility has been further complicated by the recent possibility of using foetal tissue from aborted foetus. Is it right to use material from other sources than the married couple in order to produce a child? Whose child would this be? What is the difference between this and fornication? On the other hand

those who are excessively fertile now have a choice of contraceptive methods from hormonal control to surgically induced infertility such as vasectomy or sterilisation.

Clearly the heart motive must be examined by each individual. There are areas and techniques that conflict with God's word and these are sinful and forbidden. There are other areas where we have freedoms. Are children absolutely essential to the success of a marriage?

Consideration should also be given to the needs of the child. Children for many, satisfy a selfish desire in the parents. They may only want a baby, but babies become adults! What provisions are parents to make for their children? Paul makes the point that parents should provide for their children (*2Co 12:14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.*). Is it right to bring children into poverty? If there are marital problems, is it right to bring a child into the relationship before things are put right? We argue that a child has a right to life and protection under law, and why not rights in respect of its prospective family, home and environment?

Liberalisation of principles is fraught with danger and is often the way forward to excesses. If you accept the destruction of young life, then why not elderly persons? Then it is a short step to removing any person you do not like!

### **The Last Day...of Creation.**

The original diet of mankind was vegetarian. The animals were also vegetarian (*Gen 1:30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.*) and by this provision did not have to prey on one another to survive. Nature was not created "red in tooth and claw" as Tennyson wrote, so this must have come later, most likely as the result of the curse (*Gen 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*).

When the man sinned the 'dominion covenant' had added complications. (*Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*) The creation was turned against man to make his task more difficult but not impossible. The difficulty was in the hard labour (*Gen 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*) and the task complicated by a creation fighting against man for his crimes against God.

In Romans (*Rom 8:20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,*), the 'bondage' of the creature is spoken of, which I suggest relates to the effects of sin. The animals are 'souls' whereas the vegetable material is not, and although the creature is not in God's image, there is respect for the soul (the life is in the blood) and perhaps for this reason man had no cause to eat meat. The death of man (*Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,*

*according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:)* in trespass and sin spilled over into the creation at large and God subjected the whole realm to 'vanity' (Rom 8:20 *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,).*

It may be at this stage that creation began to strive amongst itself. It is interesting to observe that creatures seldom kill those of their own species even when competing against each other. The Darwinian idea of 'natural' selection and the survival of the fittest is certainly not proven by intra-species competition. Inter-species predation and the food chain arising from it are consequences of the fall.

However, we should note that when Noah populated the Ark, it was to keep the "flesh alive" and further that provender was gathered for the humans and the creatures. This would perhaps imply a vegetarian diet in the Ark. Whether this was consistent with the state from creation, or was a special dispensation for the time is not proven. *Gen 6:20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. Gen 6:21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.*

The Garden of Eden and the Ark of Noah are typical of the Kingdom of God, where death is banished and all creation is preserved in harmony with each other. This is clearly the case in the prophecy of Isaiah. In particular, the creatures normally associated with butchery are now vegetarian. *Isa 66:17 They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD. Isa 66:18 For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. Isa 66:19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. Isa 66:20 And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. Isa 66:21 And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. Isa 66:22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. Isa 66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. Isa 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

How can we reconcile this with the position of the church, where meat eating has been expressly condoned, where the distinction of clean and unclean have been removed and where the vegetarian position of a limited diet is considered to be weakness ?

*Act 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Act 10:13 And there came a voice to*

*him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. Rom 14:2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Rom 14:3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Rom 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. Rom 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

To suggest an answer to this we must see where man first eats meat. This would appear to be just after the Flood (*Gen 9:2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Gen 9:3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. Gen 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat*). Up to that time, animals were killed for sacrifice to God and if man ever ate a creature up to that time, it was without the permission of God.

*Gen 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. God killed animals for a covering, Abel sacrificed sheep for a offering. Gen 4:4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: Gen 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

We may also ask, "why, if man could survive comfortably as a vegetarian, would he adopt a different diet"? Daniel was at pains to avoid contamination by a delicate diet, although one might argue that the Babylonian diet may have had a pagan religious association for the faithful Jew. Nonetheless, a simple diet is sufficient for a man's needs. *Dan 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Dan 1:16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.*

The permission to eat meat was a privilege akin to fellowship with God, partaking of the altar (*1Co 10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*), an act of communion as Paul puts it. The origins of meat eating lie in the developing relationship with God culminating in the participation in the greatest sacrifice of all (*1Co 10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*), the body of Christ! So although the New Testament 'Holy Communion' is called the Lord's supper (*1Co 11:20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.*) it is elevated above and separated from the common meal (*1Co 11:22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*).

There are then three ideas emerging from the vegetarian nature of the creation.

- It anticipates the peace and harmony of the Kingdom of God.
- It separates the sacrifices of God from the common meal.
- It anticipates The Great Sacrifice of Christ.

## The First Sabbath.

Genesis chapter 2 describes the first Sabbath. *Gen 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. Gen 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. Gen 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.*

Sabbath observance is a matter of contention among Christians and so rather than give a general exposition at this point I will deal with specific issues on a question and answer basis.

### In what sense does God rest?

The Lord never sleeps (*Psa 121:4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*) and until the time of Christ continued to work (*Joh 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*). Rest in the first case was from His creative labours. It is not said that this seventh day had an evening and a morning.

### What does 'rest' consist of?

I would suggest that it is in the delight in His persons. Christ is the true Sabbath (*Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*) for we rest in Him, so that there is clearly a spiritual dimension to rest. It is also the cessation from the labours that characterised the week.

### Can man presume to enter the 'rest of God'?

The fact that God observes rest is no justification for man to copy His actions. Man initially was vegetarian, but there was no direct prohibition on meat eating. This privilege was granted after the Flood (*Gen 9:3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.*), implying that the Lord will grant us to share in His 'things' when He is ready and not before. By this token, I would suggest that Sabbath observation before the law would have been presumption.

### Is man invited into this rest?

In an earthly sense yes, when the Covenant with Moses is ratified on Sinai (*Exo 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:*). In the spiritual sense, yes again, although the requirements for entering this rest are far more stringent. Man must be in Christ.

*Heb 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; Heb 3:15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. Heb 3:16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. Heb 3:17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned,*

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*whose carcases fell in the wilderness? Heb 3:18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? Heb 3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Heb 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Heb 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Heb 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. Heb 4:4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. Heb 4:5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Heb 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Heb 4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Heb 4:8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. Heb 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Heb 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Heb 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

The 'rest' (Gk. sabbatismos Heb 4 v 9) in Christ is also something that we have not yet fully entered.

### **When was the Sabbath institutionalised?**

The Sabbath was institutionalised and codified in the Law of Moses at Sinai (Exodus 20). It is given with the 'ten law words' (the apodictic law) when the Nation of Israel is born and marks the peculiar relationship with God (*Exo 31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you).*

### **What is Sabbath?**

Sabbath means rest, and in the old Assyrian the root word meant "heart ceasing". It was a holy time when people afflicted their souls (*Lev 16:31 It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.*) and abstained from menial tasks.

The Sabbath had a number of variants:

- Weekly (Hebdomadal) (*Exo 20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*).
- Seventh year (*Lev 25:4 But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.*)
- Forty Ninth year (Jubilees) (*Lev 25:8 And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine*

years. Lev 25:9 *Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. Lev 25:10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. Lev 25:11 A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. Lev 25:12 For it is the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. Lev 25:13 In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession. Lev 25:14 And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another: Lev 25:15 According to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: Lev 25:16 According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee.)*

### **What was the punishment for failure to observe?**

- Death was the penalty for disobedience of the weekly Sabbath, (*Exo 31:14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Num 15:32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. Num 15:33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. Num 15:34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. Num 15:35 And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. Num 15:36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.*).
- Exile in the case of the seventh year (*2Ch 36:21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.*) and for many death.

### **What is the New Testament attitude to the Jewish Sabbath?**

- It is not imposed upon the gentiles (see Acts 15) and Christians are under no obligation to observe it for it is not a matter for judgement. (*Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*)
- There was nothing stopping the natural Jews from observing it (Acts 15) but equally, they had no right to impose it as a matter of salvation.

We are not under law. Sabbath falls under the heading "matter of conscience" and if anyone observes a day, it should be with some consideration of the Lord. *Rom 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to*

*make him stand. Rom 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Rom 14:6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. Rom 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. Rom 14:8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

### **What does the Sabbath prefigure?**

It prefigures the rest in Christ when we enter glory (Heb 4, Col 2:16 *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*). Paul in Colossians shows us that the Sabbath was a mere shadow, but the reality lay with Christ. Sadly, many are under law and into shadows rather than resting in Christ.

### **Is the weekly Sabbath the same as Sunday (1st day of the week)?**

There is not one shred of biblical evidence to link the two. They are as far as the New Testament is concerned, two different days, and it is without any authority that men transfer the institution of the Jewish seventh day onto the First day of the Christian week.

### **East in Eden.**

God, or more correctly Jehovah God (first occurrence of Jehovah = Gen 2:4 *These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,*), planted a garden IN Eden (Gen 2:8 *And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.*). The word garden (Heb. gan) is an enclosed or sheltered spot. The Septuagint (LXX or Greek version of the Old Testament) has the word paradise, "And God planted paradise, in Eden, Eastwards". Paradise is derived from a Persian word, equivalent to a royal park. A place of peculiar beauty and excellence, as Leupold says, best reflects God's favour towards His chief creature.

The word is taken into the canon of New Testament scripture and used three times.

- *Luke 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*
- *2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*
- *Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

The garden is "eastwards", as far as the author of Genesis is concerned, and this would place it in the region of Assyria. The name Eden is derived from the corresponding noun "delight", so we see that God

had made a garden of delights for Adam. Although man lost paradise, yet it was promised again to the nation of God's people.

*Isaiah 51:3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.*

Is there a link between the idea of God the gardener and Jesus the gardener (*Joh 20:15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*)? The thief on the cross was going to be with Jesus there on the day of his death (*Luk 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*).

Not many would consider death as the entrance into paradise, but for those who look to Jesus it most certainly is and for some it may be possible to taste it from this life (*2Co 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*). This shows us in addition, that the intermediate state, the state between physical death and the resurrection is one of conscious pleasure (and comfort, see the story of the rich man and Lazarus) for the saint.

From the land of Eden, flowed a river, from an artesian source (it had not rained) that watered the garden (*Gen 2:10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.*) and passing from there was divided into four heads. The Pishon (Ganges or Indus), the Gihon (Nile), the Hiddekel (Tigris) and the Euphrates. The names in parenthesis have been suggested by different writers, but we must observe that there is no geographic feature that resembles this pattern today. What we have is the antediluvian (before the flood) geography, and this has clearly been changed!

The land was also full of precious materials (*Gen 2:11 The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; Gen 2:12 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.*), but what purpose would these have had before the fall?

Yet, however good the creation, there was one thing that was not good. "It was not good that man should be alone" (*Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*). So as to rectify this God made a "counterpart his like". By this, any relationship, other than heterosexual with the same species, is condemned, since God in His wisdom deemed this the most perfect solution.

It is sad that many professing Christianity accept alternative relationships as valid in the eyes of God, even trying to claim biblical support. There is none, and additionally, such attitudes deny the fact of creation.

Why do we see such behaviour? According to Paul in Romans (*Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which*

*are not convenient;*), one reason is that man rejects the true knowledge of God. In turn God gives them over to their lusts. When man perverts the image of God, God makes man a pervert.

### The Two Trees.

Two trees were put in the garden of God. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (ToKGE) and the Tree of Life (ToL) (*Gen 2:9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*). There was no prohibition against eating the ToL initially, only against eating the ToKGE (*Gen 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*). There was no prohibition recorded against touching its fruit, although Eve thought so (*Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*).

The ToL had the power over death, which taken in the context seems to be physical death (*Gen 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:*). Whether this had a medicinal function or whether its power came from the decree of God is not clear.

The ToKGE had the power to give a man the ability to know what was good and what was evil. The devil had some understanding of its working and purpose (*Gen 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*). He implied that God had put the prohibition on the tree because He did not want the man and the woman to become like HIM! As if they could!

There is nothing wrong in knowing good and evil in itself. We have to have this knowledge in order to exercise a Christian walk (*1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind*). The point is where do we get this knowledge from? We might obtain it from our life experience, although this might involve us in actual sin. We might obtain it from the scripture and the documentation of the lives of other saints and sinners. We might obtain it by the direct revelation from God, associated with a life walking with Him. I suggest that Adam would have gained knowledge in this manner. The devil enticed Adam to by-pass God and this is at the root of the original sin.

What is the knowledge of good and evil? To understand this, we turn to Paul's epistle to the Romans and chapter 7. This is a difficult chapter and many Christians understand it to teach that a Christian can be a 'wretched man' (*Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*). This is because they think that Paul is describing his own experience as a believer (*Rom 7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?*). However, if you look for the central thrust of the passage, you will see that it is the 'law' and its effects on men.

The word 'law' is used 16 times in Romans chapter 7. The first section deals with the law as it functions in life. *Rom 7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? Rom 7:2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. Rom 7:3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Rom 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Rom 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. Rom 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

Death clears us from certain legal obligations, like marriage (v2), similarly, the death of Christ frees us from the law that leads to death into the freedom of the spirit (v6).

In the second section we see how 'law', particularly the law of Moses brings us into bondage and death, but Christ can deliver us. I think that 'the wretched man' in the context is **the man under law**. *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Rom 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Rom 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. Rom 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. Rom 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Rom 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. Rom 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Rom 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Rom 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. The law is described as follows:*

- The law makes us know sin (Rom 7 v 7).
- The law could kill (Rom 7 v 9).
- The law is holy and just and good (Rom 7 v 13).
- The law shows the sinfulness of sin (Rom 7 v 13).
- The law is spiritual (Rom 7 v 14).

We observe from Genesis, that the ToKGE has the same properties. The tree was made by God and could be said to be holy, just and good. It revealed sin as can be seen in the guilt of Adam and Eve. It also proved fatal, in that it killed them.

I am suggesting that the ToKGE is a symbol of the law and it stands beside, but in contrast to the ToL. One kills, the other brings life. This is a clue to the symbolism of the ToL. *Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

*Revelation 22:14 Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

- *John 1:4 In him was **life**; and the **life** was the light of men.*
- *John 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal **life**. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting **life**.*
- *John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting **life**: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see **life**; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*
- *John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting **life**.*
- *John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal **life**: and they are they which testify of me. 40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have **life**.*
- *John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the **life**: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Can there be any doubt that Jesus Christ is the archetype of the tree of **life**?

### The Serpent.

The serpent was subtle or cunning and has become the symbol of stealth and the 'forked' tongue has become a symbol of deceit. The serpent is identified as the devil himself. *Rev 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.*



I would suggest that here is the first manifestation of demon possession and shows that animals can be demon possessed (this happened in the New Testament when Jesus permitted the devils to enter the Gadarene swine). The woman is not distressed by this manifestation and that may not be surprising as she was still learning of the world around her.

The serpent appears often in the scripture. It was a sign given by God to the Egyptians. *Exo 4:2 And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. Exo 4:3 And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.*

In Numbers, they are sent as a punishment upon the Israelites for rebellion. *Num 21:6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Num 21:7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents.* The remedy for this was to look upon the brass serpent. *Num 21:9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*

This is both a warning and an example. It is a warning to the church not to behave in a similar manner and put God to the test. *1 Cor 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.* This implies that churches are liable to God's retribution (see the letters to the churches in the book of Revelation).

It is an example of the saving power of Christ over the bite of the serpent satan. *Jon 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.* Here is the simplicity of the gospel. As it is written in the prophecy of Isaiah, *Isa 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I [am] God, and [there is] none else.* The whole image of a dying man, looking to the Son of Man for life is perfectly expressed here. As the hymn writer said, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling".

For many people the cross has become more than the symbol of salvation, it has become a power in its own right. It has become a charm and an object of veneration. This was a problem with the 'serpent of brass' that Moses made. It became an object of worship, but was destroyed by the good king Hezekiah. *2 Kin 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.*

The appearance of satan in Eden is of interest for a number of reasons. Firstly it shows that sin was already part of the cosmic fabric. A 'fall' had already occurred in heaven with the supernatural creation. Secondly, the presence of the evil one in the garden of God must have been by Divine consent, but equally the presence of satan of itself does not pollute (see chapter "The State of the Earth"). There are other occasions in scripture when satan comes into the presence of God (see for example the story of Job).

Thirdly, satan was part of God's purpose and a tool in the 'fall'. Satan and his horde were clearly not

banished from heaven (*1Ki 22:19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.*). They were not all confined in the abyss (*Luk 8:30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. Luk 8:31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.*) although, *2 Pet 2:4 God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast [them] down to hell, and delivered [them] into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.* Are there two types of supernatural creation, the angels and those that became demons?

The purpose of satan at the beginning and ever since is to malign the integrity of God, to destroy man's relationship with God, and ruin the creation. He is still at work!

### **Strong Women, Weak Men.**

We now consider what is commonly called in theology, "the Fall", by which we understand the fall of mankind from the grace and favour of God. The devil as always pretends to want mankind's good, but in truth destroys at every opportunity.

While it is quite clear that the woman took the first bite of the forbidden fruit, the transgression is attributed to Adam. *1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Headship and Divine order cannot be cast off at will. Responsibility resides with those whom God has placed in authority and since Adam was the head, he was responsible and answerable to God.

The woman never the less was deceived and part of the transgression. *1Ti 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.* The fact that Eve was deceived does not mean that she was mentally inferior or defective in reason and perception. There are many great men who have equally been beguiled by satan who also brings despair into their lives by deceit (see Job).

The woman was to be the counterpart to Adam and the concept of co-workers and helpers sums up their duties to each other. *Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.* It would seem that they were not together when satan first appeared to Eve or that if they were, then Adam did nothing to stop the intrusion. This may explain the verses in Timothy. *1Ti 2:11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 1Ti 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 1Ti 2:13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 1Ti 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*

The teaching and exercising authority over a man is forbidden, based on the created order. The word used for "usurp authority" (Gk: *authenteo*) means one who with his own hands kills another or himself and one who acts on his own authority, an absolute master. Strong words!

This subject inevitably leads into the role of the woman and whether she has any role in teaching. The answer is yes, and so we cannot take the words of Timothy as an absolute prohibition. *Tit 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; Tit 2:4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,*

Perhaps we should view the idea of "teaching and usurping authority" together and in the context of Genesis chapter 3. I would also point out here, that the idea of women's ordination is alien to scripture.

The process whereby satan tempts the woman is similar to the temptation of Christ in Matthew. Both were tests. *Mat 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*

Genesis	Matthew
You can eat the fruit	You can make the bread
You will not die	God will always save you
You will be Lord of all	You can have the world

Clearly Adam failed but Christ overcame. At that moment that the fruit passed the lips, instead of that growing wonder and joy there was an increasing guilt and shame. They acquired a sudden input of knowledge which they could not bear (see David's guilt over Bathsheba and Peters denial) and it was a guilt that prompted a peculiar action. They covered their genitals.

Why? Certainly not because of anything wrong with the human body or sexuality. Nudity and prudery owe a lot to the social inhibitions of middle class Victorian England. There is a religious reason for the covering and that I suggest lies in the guilt associated with the generations to come. The seed in the loins was under the gaze of God's wrath.

We know from elsewhere in scripture that unborn generations can be associated with historical events. It is called seminal identity, thus Levi pays tithes to Abraham centuries before his birth. *Heb 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.*

Additionally, you have a reason for male circumcision. It is ritually associated with sin and cleansing, by cutting of the flesh on the procreative organ. *Col 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

Adam and Eve were not against nudity, they were not prudes they were convicted sinners who needed protection from God.

## The Curse.

The curse upon satan was that he would be the lowest creature and would have his head crushed, while he would bite the heel of man. Here is the statement of enmity that would characterise the conflict between man and satan, but we see that the gospel of Christ heralds the conclusion of the conflict. The declaration that "The God of peace shall shatter satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16 v 20), appears to hark back to the testimony of God in the garden of Eden. This obvious link has led theologians to call Genesis 3 verse 15 the PROTEVANGELIUM, the first gospel. *Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

We may also have a reason here why the handling of serpent is specifically mentioned. *Mar 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

There is a group of Baptists in America, who as part of their worship, handle rattlesnakes. They do this as an act of faith and to confirm the verses in Mark 16, but you may consider that is more like tempting providence than an act of worship.

The "curse" is something women call their periods and this is perhaps a reflection upon the words of Genesis chapter 3. The curse is in four parts:

- Increase in travail
- Pain in childbirth.
- Desire to the husband.
- Husbands rule.

1) Increase in travail. The woman would suffer pain as the weaker vessel, though why should this be? It must serve as a reminder of the part she played in the fall of mankind and the entrance she occasioned for sin and suffering. Child birth does not exist in the new Heavens and the new Earth. *Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

2) The pain of childbirth was to be the greatest pain, which I gather on the scale of pain (Dols) is the most severe category (10 dols). Most people seldom get above 5! Again this must reflect the fall and the ungodliness of Eve's disobedience by which she brought suffering to man from his first entrance. She must need feel this also as pain that is multiplied. There is however a remedy, for "she shall be preserved in childbearing, if **they** continue in faith with love and with discretion". *1Ti 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. Who are **they**?*

3) The woman strove to act apart from Adam and so she must be "attracted" to her husband. Woman was to be attracted to man and it is of interest that the celibate state is not directed to the woman, except in extraordinary circumstances. *1Co 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present*

*distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.*

4) Since Eve sought to usurp the leading role, she must now accept the role of subjection.

Clearly, the biblical role for the woman has been determined as a result of the original sin. Society is trying to change the roles and relationships of men and women, which is in a measure a rebellion against God and a denial of original sin.

The curse to Adam is reflected in the hard labour that he would endure from that day forward. The ground would not be his friend and yield its substance freely and the struggle would serve to remind him of his failure until he finally fell back into the ground from which he was created. Man who wanted to be God was being taught that he was but simple flesh and bone.

This is the lesson that all men must learn the lesson of mortality. I remember a tombstone in a Sussex churchyard, it read as follows:

As I was once so you are now  
As I am now so you will be  
May God have mercy on you!

Men die because it is God's will consequent upon the disobedience of our first parents. It is not however the final suffering that man must undergo. If we fail of the grace of God, then we enter into eternal death that is a life alienated from God forever. Physical death and its inevitability is a foreshadowing and taste of that which is to come. There is though a way out, the way made by Jesus Christ.

*1Co 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 1Co 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 1Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

In Adam we labour in vain, but never in Christ.

### **God and god.**

By the act of disobedience, man had become "as one of us" as Jehovah Elohim said, "to know good and evil". There are two observations to be made here.

- Firstly, we see God describing himself as "**us**". Again, we have Older Testament evidence that God is a plurality. As we find later in scripture, this plurality is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three persons, one God.
- Secondly, God had allowed man to achieve a higher status, through sin. The knowledge of good and evil had elevated man to the position of god! Jesus alludes to this in the gospel of John, *Joh*

*10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? Compare with Psa 82:6 I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.*

Now, is this knowledge passed on to all subsequent generations? Is there an intuitive knowledge of right and wrong, the law and righteousness in all men? Some people see this functioning in what they call the conscience, however, as we have seen in previous studies, the conscience is not infallible!

It can be weak (*1Co 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*), burned out (*1Ti 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*), defiled (*Tit 1:15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*) and in need of purification (*Heb 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*), and it also needs exercise (*Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*). From this we inferred that the conscience was neither perfect, nor possessed of the full knowledge of God. In fact we would also suggest that the conscience of the sinful man requires a radical change before it can function properly.

We also observe from scripture, that "the new man", as the Christian is called (*Col 3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*), is renewed "in knowledge", further implying that the natural man is not possessed of the true knowledge of God, and thus cannot know good and evil. Fallen man does not possess the true image of God, thus he needs changing (*2Co 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*, *1Co 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* and *Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*) [see the previous chapter on **The Creation of Man**].

Therefore, we would conclude that man is not naturally endowed with the knowledge of good and evil, and that he has no faculty that naturally guides him to his duty. The best proof of this is Romans. *Rom 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*

The scripture also suggests that the very young are not in possession of the knowledge of good and evil, "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it". *Deu 1:39 Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.* It is also something that deserts the elderly.

The final turn of the screw for man was that he would be shut out of the garden of Eden to prevent him eating the tree of life and living forever. *Gen 3:23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. Gen 3:24 So he drove out the man; and*

*he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.* This does not mean that God does not want man to have eternal life. To the contrary, that is the whole thrust of the gospel, eternal life in Christ Jesus, the gift of God. *Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* What God did not want was man getting eternal life **apart** from Christ. In other words, God wants us to have eternal life, but through dependence on Him.

In order to effect this God places the barrier of the cherubim and the flaming sword before the garden. The cherubim appear in the tabernacle, on the mercy-seat, or covering of the Ark of the Covenant, the dwelling place of God and the place of communion with God. *Exo 25:17 And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. Exo 25:18 And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. Exo 25:19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. Exo 25:20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. Exo 25:21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. Exo 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

The mercy-seat according to Romans (*Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*) is symbolic of Christ, meaning that Christ is where God dwells and where we commune with God. Thus we may consider that God guarded the way to life in Eden by putting Christ in the way. Thus we can see right at the beginning, the truth that Jesus spoke, "I am the way the truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by me" (*Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*).

This is the Christian dogma, the uniqueness of Christianity, the exclusion of all other religions, the only way to God, the declaration that all others are pretenders and deceivers and that Christ is to be all and the only One.

What is it then that causes men to have such a range of beliefs and religions? Is it that there is truth in all of them and that all are equally valid? Certainly, there are elements of wisdom, common sense, common kindness and practicality in all religions, and these often make them look similar. The uniqueness of Christianity lies in the fact that man is dead in sin and that he must be redeemed before he can serve the Creator, and that redeeming is by one person alone, Jesus Christ.

Other religions presume that we all have a relationship with God by nature, and this is a root of error.



## The Tabernacle

Previously, we alluded to the tabernacle when studying the cherubim. The tabernacle of the congregation was the focus of ritual worship, with a place of slaughter and sacrifice and a tribe of specialists to administer the services. We also inferred that the items in the tabernacle have a spiritual message and convey aspects of Christ to us. Let us take some time to prove that statement.

The tabernacle was made according to a design given from heaven (*Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*). The tabernacle was therefore a representation of something in heaven, something spiritual and not earthly.

The earthly copy is called the **first tabernacle** (*Heb 9:2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. Heb 9:3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;*) and as such did not provide the perfect worship and service offered. *Heb 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Heb 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;*), the **"better and more perfect tabernacle"**, which is the high priest is Christ, by this we may infer that the earthly high priest was a type of Christ (by **type** we mean something that prefigures, or acts as a copy of the original).

We also see that the sacrifices of the first tabernacle ministered an outward separation or sanctification by the sacrifice of animals (*Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:*). This means that it had a ritual significance in the Jewish society, and satisfied outward order and conformity to legal expectations respecting forgiveness and reconciliation. It did not affect the inner man, or the conscience! *Heb 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Now we see in this same passage that the 'blood of Christ' is set in contrast with the 'blood of goats and bulls' a being far more effectual. Thus we may conclude that the Older Testament sacrifices prefigured the perfect sacrifice of Christ. They also then, were a type of Christ, and so we see that Christ was both the high priest and the sacrifice.

In John's Gospel we hear Jesus saying that He is the temple (the greek word, naos, means sanctuary, or the Holy place including the Holy of Holies). *Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple of his body. Joh 2:22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.* Again we have

established a type of Christ. Christ is the **true tabernacle** . *Heb 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

When Jesus dies on the cross, the veil of the temple is torn from **TOP** (out of reach of man, thus an act of God), to the bottom. *Mat 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. Mat 27:51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;* This veil according to the writer of Hebrews was the flesh of Christ. *Heb 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;*

So Jesus is both the tabernacle and a detail of the tabernacle, namely the veil, which you will see from Exodus have cherubim embroidered on the fabric. *Exo 26:31 And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: Exo 26:32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. Exo 26:33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.*

Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, declares that Jesus is the '**mercyseat**', another reference to the tabernacle furniture, this part being an element of the Ark of the Covenant. *Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

On seeing Jesus, John the Baptist exclaims, "behold the Lamb **of God**, which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1 v 29) and by this statement reveals another type of Christ, namely that the lambs of the sin offerings which were prefiguring the death of Christ.

The manna from heaven, God's special diet for the wandering Jews of the Exodus, was another type of Christ, the 'true bread' that comes down out of heaven. *Joh 6:31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*

The term 'true' is used of the 'true tabernacle' (*Heb 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*), the 'true light' (*Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*) and the 'true vine' all prefiguring Christ. **Joh 15:1** *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* This implies a much wider range for typology, entering into the realm of Biology and Physics!

From the examples that we have studied, we can see that typology is not just a fanciful approach to the interpretation of Scripture, it is a valid area for Biblical study. As Peter reminds us, "we have not been redeemed with silver or gold" (*1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;* ), but with something more precious, the blood of Christ . *Exo 30:13 This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a*

*shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Exo 30:14 Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. Exo 30:15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. Exo 30:16 And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.*

This should encourage us to examine and meditate upon all of the forms and images of the Older Testament, because we shall be rewarded with glimpses of Christ.

Many Christians miss out on these wonderful views of the Redeemer, because they give little attention to personal study, hoping to be subsidised by the labour of others or because they are just bone idle. In typology, we have in effect a coded view of Christ which may take some effort to understand.

### Shepherds and farmers

Little is mentioned of the female siblings of Cain and Abel and it can only be that they married their sisters. While this is a clear infringement of the later Mosaic law of consanguinity, that law was not yet in place. *Lev 20:17 And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity.* I am not sure what the genetic implications are but it may well have been an advantage to increase the size of the original pool without losing any of the traits?

However, the focus of the Genesis narrative is not principally biological, it is religious and moral. Having documented the fall and decline of man it looks at reconciliation. I do not believe that the sons of Adam were left to explore for God and by some random, trial and error process come to a discovery of what God wanted them to do. I think that there is plenty of evidence that God reveals Himself and His will to man (i.e. the Law at Sinai). It seems highly unlikely that Adam had not practised worship and sought after the Lord and that from his communion with God, the nature of service was taught. We see from Hebrews (*Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*) that Abel's sacrifice was an act of faith! Where does faith come from (*Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*)?

A number of years had passed from the fall by the time that we come again to look at the Adam's family. It is not absolutely clear how many children they have had, but two, Cain and Abel are grown up and at work. In the process of time (Literally: at the end of days), perhaps at some set feast they came before the Lord. It may be that they approached the garden where the Cherubim were guarding the way to the Tree of Life and there set up an altar. There was only one occasion when the latter day Jews approached the Cherubim and that was on the day of Atonement (Yom Kippur: Day of covering) {see Leviticus

chapter 16). Since atonement is central to the maintenance of fellowship with God it may be that this was the earliest form of worship, however, we may only know for certain if the Lord reveals it to us in Glory.

Early religious expression did not involve a special priesthood rather it was the privilege of individuals and in particular heads of families. There is the touching story of Job who regularly made sacrifices for his children because he cared for their souls. *Job 1:4 And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.* While they were 'partying on' he was endeavouring to make them right with God. Job was a good parent.

The story of Cain and Abel's sacrifices is well known together with the subsequent jealousy that spilt over into anger and murder. The difference in the offerings is quite clear, for one is a blood sacrifice and the other is a harvest offering. Both of these offerings are seen later in Leviticus (chapters 1 and 2) to have validity in the eyes of God.

From the words of Genesis 4 (*Gen 4:7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*) it appears that Cain's countenance is fallen and unlike Abel he did not offer by faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (*Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God rewarder of them that diligently seek him. must believe that he is, and that he is a*). There was unbelief in his wretched life and sin at his door. "If thou doest not right, then at the door there is a sin, a crouching beast, striving to get at thee, but thou shouldst rule over it" (Leupold's translation).

At such an early stage in the human race, we see the seeds of unbelief in a man's life such that he could not accept what God had said. Much has been made of the blood sacrifice of Abel with the implication that a blood offering should precede a fruit offering, but both offerings have their place before God. The thrust of scripture is that faith was the key! Week after week, people go to church, following some ritual without believing what they are doing.

We heard the testimony of Charlie Duke, one of the Apollo astronauts that went to the moon. He was invited to a Bible study at the church he attended. During this study he was challenged by the question "who is Jesus?" He realised that if he didn't accept Jesus at face value, then there was no value in Jesus! He became a believer.

The world although sparsely populated, was not big enough to contain Cain and Abel, and Cain in his anger spilled his brother's blood. When God asks Cain where Abel is, the wicked man turns to Him and says "am I my brother's keeper?" No he was not his brother's keeper, he was his brother's brother and he was his brother's murderer.

The life blood soaked into the ground but its voice was not silent before God. Here we have the first martyr and prophet (*Luk 11:49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: Luk 11:50 That the blood of all the*

*prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; Luk 11:51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.)). This tide of blood- letting had flowed deeper and deeper with the progress of time, yet it would be also required of a later generation that they would account for it. Unbelief and murder are charged against all generations of unbelievers.*

### The Next Generation.

Cain was to bear a mark for life because of what he had done, yet this was an act of mercy from God, not a punishment. The punishment was the exile and isolation from the presence of God. *Gen 4:14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*

Just what the mark of Cain is we may only speculate, except that it was something visible to those who would kill him, perhaps warning of God's retribution. There is mention of God marking His people in Ezekiel and by contrast, the mark of the beast. *Eze 9:4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. Rev 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

We have two groups of decedents before us in Genesis chapter 4 and chapter 5, and there are interesting differences between the two. The line of decent through Seth is described in "the book of the generations of Adam".

Name	Meaning	Name	Meaning
CAIN	Possession	SECH 912	Appointed
ENOCK	Dedicated	ENOSH 905	Frail man
IRAD	Witness	CAINAN 910	Possession
MEHUJAEEL	Destroyed of God	MAHALALEEL 895	Praise of God
METHUSHAEL	Man of god	JARED 962	Descend
LEMECH	Powerful	ENOCK 365	Dedicated
JABAL/JUBAL/TUBAL-CAIN	Leading	METHUSHELAH 969	When he is dead it shall be sent
		LEMECH 777	Powerful
		NOAH 950	Comfort

This is a peculiar term which appears a number of times in the Old Testament and in the New Testament in Matthew. *Mat 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* As we have seen before, Matthew's account lists the line of Joseph and Luke's account lists the generation of Mary. *Luk 3:23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,*

For the record, let us note some of the contrasts:

MATTHEWS ACCOUNT	LUKES ACCOUNT
Abraham to man	Man to Adam to God
Genealogy of a King	Genealogy of a man
Legal succession	Natural descent
41 generations (4 omitted)= 45 21 from Abraham to Adam (see Luke) TOTAL = 66 generations	77 generations
Joseph's line	Mary's line

The line of Seth to Noah is clearly the line of Christ and this would offer us an explanation for statement in Genesis. *Gen 4:25 And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.*

The term "another seed" rather than another child, is perhaps to direct us to the Biblical concept of seed. Abraham was promised "seed" by God and this was fulfilled in two ways. *Gen 15:3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. Gen 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

Firstly, there was the seed that was to inherit Canaan and the covenant, the natural Israel and the Israel after the flesh. *Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: Gen 16:7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. Gen 16:8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. Gen 16:9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. Gen 16:10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 1Co 10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*

Secondly, there was also the spiritual Israel, the Israel of God (*Gal 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*). There was an earthly nation

and a spiritual nation. The spiritual nation is one in Christ, who is referred to as the seed of Abraham. *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

We may see therefore that the term seed has reference to the spiritual inheritance not simply earthly descent and I would suggest that is the thought for Eve. She had lost a beloved and faithful son and did not look to her other murderous son to fulfil her joy. It could only be through a new child.

The family of Adam and Eve appear to be divided from the start. There is the line who are remembered for their artistry and artisanship. Through this line we see the start of polygamy and the increase in crime. *Gen 4:19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. Gen 4:23 And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. Gen 4:24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

There is also no record of their age.

Archbishop Usher (born 1581, whose chronology is used in the headings of the Authorised Version) and others who have attempted to place a date upon creation, used the biblical chronology of the generations that were dated, back to Adam. Since the generations that are dated here are the line of the "seed", it may be a spiritual rather than a temporal decent, hence there could be generations missing (see above table). Also, many complete the Old Testament chronology by interpolating the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy as a year for a day (70 x 7 years). {For a detailed account of the chronological record see Philip Mauro's book, *The Wonders of Biblical Chronology*, Reiner Publications 1974}.

I advise caution when looking at Biblical chronology because it has caused much disappointment and lack of credibility among Christians. It may be that the dates are literal or figurative, for example, the 70 weeks of Daniel's vision, over which there is much disagreement. The fact that there are differences between Christians is a warning of dangerous ground.

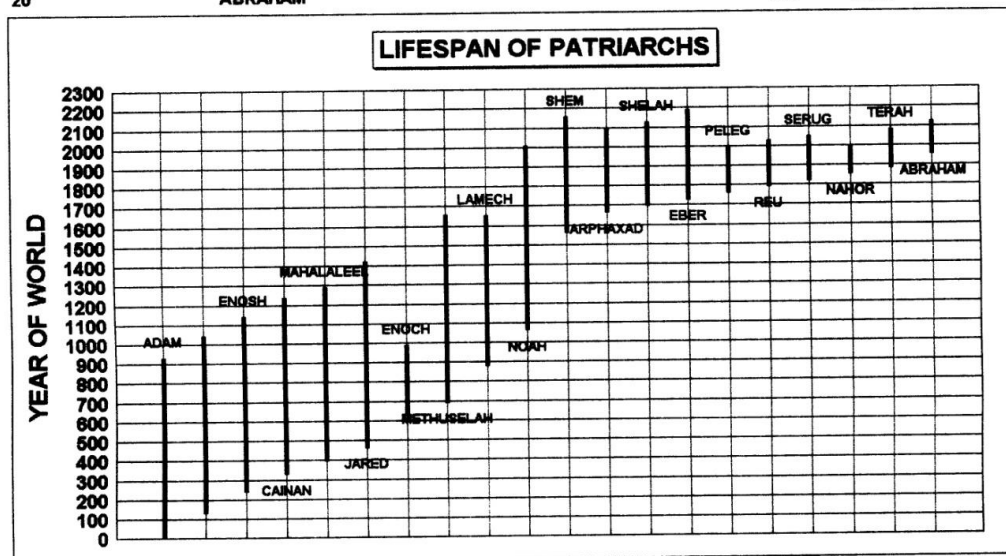
There are examples where time in prophecy is literal, for example the four hundred years of Abraham which is fulfilled in Exodus. *Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; Exo 12:40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.*

What rule might we apply? I would suggest that time in the context of spiritual (Messianic) events (that is events beyond the temporal horizon) is non-literal. Time as it relates to temporal events is literal.

### **The Generations of Adam.**

The tables and charts below give some statistics associated with Adam and the generations that came from him.

			AGE AT FATHERHOOD	YEAR OF WORLD	YEARS AFTER FATHERHOOD	LIFESPAN	YEAR OF DEATH
				0			
1	ADAM		130	130	800	930	930
2		SETH	105	235	807	912	1042
3	ENOSH		90	325	815	905	1140
4		CAINAN	70	395	840	910	1235
5	MAHALALEEL		65	460	830	895	1290
6		JARED	162	622	800	962	1422
7	ENOCK		65	687	300	365	987
8		METHUSELAH	187	874	782	969	1656
9	LAMECH		182	1056	595	777	1651
10		NOAH	500	1556	450	950	2006
11	SHEM		100	1658	500	600	2156
12		ARPHAXAD	35	1693	403	438	2096
13	SHELAH		30	1723	403	433	2126
14		EBER	34	1757	430	464	2187
15	PELEG		30	1787	209	239	1996
16		REU	32	1819	207	239	2026
17	SERUG		30	1849	200	230	2049
18		NAHOR	29	1878	119	148	1997
19	TERAH		70	1948	135	205	2083
20		ABRAHAM				175	2123



Firstly we observe that the age when they fathered offspring was between 65 years and 187 years (mean = 117.3 years see chart: **AGE AT FATHERHOOD**), however we should ask whether this was their first child? We have seen that Adam had two previous sons, Cain and Abel, before Seth was born when he was 130 years. The generations of Adam, as we suggested last time was the genealogy of the "seed", that is, the line of Christ and therefore do not necessarily represent the eldest son of the family.

There is no mention of any female line but we see that daughters were born to the patriarchs. *Gen 5:4 And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:*

The failure to name the female line again leads us to consider the unique purpose of the genealogy.

As we have seen, Adam was 130 years old when he had Seth, but these were the years of his life! *Gen 5:3 And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth:*



Since he was created with age, we might ask what his apparent age was and how old he appeared at creation? We have a habit of underestimating peoples ages perhaps from the illustrations we see in children's Bibles. Isaac is portrayed as a young boy, but it is quite likely that he was nearly 40! Sarah was 90 years old when he was born and died aged 127 years. *Gen 17:17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? Gen 23:1 And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.*

The visit to Moriah is narrated in the chapter before Sarah's death, so Isaac could be a lot older than we think. The term "lad" is also applied to Joshua who was between 30 and 50 years! *Gen 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. Exo 33:11 And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.*

The average age of the patriarchs was 847 years (see chart: **LIFESPAN**), with the oldest Methuselah living to 969 years. No one lived for a millennium (I leave you to consider if this is significant). If we look at the chart, we see that Enoch fathered Methuselah when he was 65 years, in the 687th year of the world. If we add the lifespan of Methuselah to this figure (i.e. 969 + 687) we get to the 1656th year of the world, the year when the flood came. Thus Methuselah died in the year of the flood. His name means "When he is dead it shall be sent" (see previous notes), from which we may conclude that it was prophetic and that the knowledge of some judgement from God was known for hundreds of years before it arrived.

Is the longevity of the patriarchs typical or specific to the generations of Adam? Did the generations of Cain live as long as the generations of Adam? It is suggested that people generally lived longer before the flood because the damaging effects of solar radiation was reduced by a vapour canopy that was destroyed after the flood. It is obvious from scripture that longevity declined rapidly after the flood (see chart: **LIFESPAN OF THE PATRIARCHS**).

The flood occurred 2 years before the birth of Arphaxad whose lifespan was 438 years. If life expectancy is dependent on genetic factors that were subsequently altered after the flood in individuals, then the effect is immediate, but appears to be phased, that is, the scale declines further with time. Why then should life taper off at about seventy years? *Psa 90:10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

From the data we observe some further interesting facts. By adding the age of the individual at death to the year of the world at their birth, we can compute the year of the world at their death. From this we can see that Noah died in the year of the world 2006, also that Abraham was born in the year of the world 1948. This means that Noah and Abraham were alive together in the world at the same time and were contemporaries for at least 58 years. In fact there was a period in Abraham's life when all of the patriarchs born after the flood were alive together, including Noah. (Note:2020 this is correct if you use the Massoretic text, the Septuagint gives us a longer age and it is not true).

We also observe that Abraham was effectively 3 generations removed from creation. That is Adam, Methuselah and Noah, whose lives overlapped.

### The Approaching Judgement.

Genesis chapter 6 gives a brief history of mankind before God destroys them. Firstly we see the affairs of the sons of God (Elohim), who some commentators suggest are angelic beings. This idea comes from the use of the phrase in Job ,where the sons of God come into the presence of God and satan joins them. *Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. Job 38:7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

It is not absolutely clear that the term 'sons of God' equates with angels, and we are not aware that ordinary men came to present themselves to God, and therefore in the absence of other evidence we might agree that these were angels in the book of Job.

There is however, a major objection to this interpretation in Genesis, since the sons of God are seen to father offspring. *Gen 6:4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.* According to Jesus angels neither marry nor are given in marriage, but does this mean that they are incapable of reproducing? *Mat 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.* This would leave us with two meanings to the phrase 'sons of God', namely angels (as in Job) or those who believed in God here in Genesis the "Sethites". *Joh 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

It is not clear whether Jehovah's words "**My Spirit shall not always strive with man**" are inserted as a comment on the action of the sons of God in taking wives of the daughters of men, and by implication suggesting that they were wrong in what they did. *Gen 6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*

The offspring were mighty men of renown (Gen 6 v 4), but it is not clear that were bad men, but again, following this statement is the comment of God that He "**saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth**". Since there are no other persons mentioned, it may be that God is commenting on the apostasy of the faith and that this sprang from mixed marriages.

There were also 'Nephilim', rendered giants in some translations, and this leans heavily upon the translation in the Septuagint (Gen 6 v 4). The word is derived from the Hebrew verb 'to fall upon'. We are more likely looking at robbers or bandits rather than tall people, and this would be more in line with the general tenor of condemnation for the godlessness of the times. We would often like to read things

into scripture, for example, to find a reason why large creatures such as Dinosaurs existed, but this might just divert us from the real purpose of the words in front of us.

We are dealing with a time in the history of the world that mirrors the time to come when the world will end. That is what we are being encouraged to understand in Genesis. In Matthew's gospel, we are shown that the days of Noah are an example to us of the lack of awareness of the population, concerning the approaching judgement. They were involved in their own selfish lives, planning their feasts, planning their marriages, planning their families and above all planning wickedness. *Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

James warns against such godless attitudes, where the 'will of The Lord' has no part in the equation of life. *Jas 4:13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Jas 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Jas 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

The Bible is not against making plans, but it is against making plans that have not been submitted to God for approval. *Psa 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.* In our dealings with men, we often require permission to do things, for example, planning permission for buildings. We must develop this act of courtesy before God!

Little did Noah's generation know that God had started a countdown timer (Gen 6 v 3) and that they had only 120 years left at best. This period is called "the longsuffering of God", time to allow Noah and his family to build and provision the Ark. *1Pe 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.*

Motivated by the fear of God, Noah acted in faith and commenced a work that would take the best part of 100 years. *Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

How are we to understand the words of Genesis 6 that "Jehovah repented". *Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.* Surely this is at odds with our understanding that God knows the end from the beginning and plans all things after the counsel of His own will. Surely He cannot be taken by surprise, by events, to the extent that He has a change of plan or purpose? Is there anything that God might say of it, that He would that it had not happened, by that implying that He would rather have done differently? This would contradict other scriptures. *1Sa 15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. Num 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should*

*repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*

What we are dealing with is called "anthropomorphism", a figure used to describe any view of God's nature which conceives Him as possessing or exercising any attributes common to Him with mankind. When He is said to repent, or to be grieved, or to be jealous, it is only meant that He acts towards us as a man would when agitated by such passions. It is a representation of the truth from our point of view.

Is man entitled to view God in this way? I think so. God made man in His image and in order to help man understand His ways, His works and His relationships, such metaphors are justified. They teach us truths about ourselves.

### NOAH....The man

Noah is described as a 'righteous perfect' man in his generation. *Gen 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*

He was unique in his day. Yet despite his goodness, as we shall see, he had feet of clay. It is however, one of the great encouragements of scripture, to see that despite mans failing, God is gracious enough to record their triumphs and not dwell upon their shortcomings and their sins (see the testimonies in Hebrews).

David was a great man, yet it is recorded that he sinned on numerous occasions. He caused an innocent man to be killed, he committed adultery, and he disobeyed God and numbered the people of Israel. This did not disbar him from heaven or reduce his status as a national hero, and it is not an excuse for *Christians to take liberties with God. "What, shall we sin that grace may abound?" (Rom 6 v 1). David was convicted of his crimes and he learned from them just as we must also. Failure does not necessarily mean disqualification from eternal life, but it certainly requires repentance and change. When people sin and do not repent and change, their lives can make no claims on Christ!*

*Noah's father Lamech, had an understanding of the things to come, and saw the baby Noah as a comfort in the time of troubles. Gen 5:29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed. Simeon had a similar expectation in the Christ child. Luk 2:30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* They both became deliverers of mankind, one after an earthly fashion and the other spiritual.

Noah was principally a preacher or herald (Gk. kerux), one who had a message to pronounce, but it would appear that he had little effect on his generation. *2Pe 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.* That does not mean that he was not a success, because he was faithful, and found favour with God. *Gen 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.* Converts or followers are not the only measure of a successful ministry!

Noah was also a shipwright or housebuilder. The vessel that he built was called an ark, the same word

used for the basket in which Moses was preserved. *Gen 6:14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. Exo 2:3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.* This is not the same word that is used of the Ark of the Covenant.

Noah lived in times that will be like the end times, not dissimilar to today. *Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* There were wicked men and very few good men. Noah was an exception. It would not appear that his sons enjoyed the same degree of favour! We deduce this from the words of Ezekiel that if the sin was grievous, Noah would deliver but himself, not his family or anybody else. *Eze 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.* Since Noah's sons were saved, it was by grace and through their father's faithfulness. It is common to see in the Old Testament, that children may receive blessings because their fathers are good and often may be punished along with their fathers for their father's sin.

After the flood, Noah offered sacrifice and thereby showed that he was also a priest. *Gen 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.* He also planted a vineyard and became a brewer and on occasion got loaded! *Gen 9:20 And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: Gen 9:21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.*

There are some parallels here with Adam.

They were both 'heads' of the Earth, they were Lords over all creatures, They were both commanded to 'be fruitful and multiply', they were both gardeners, both had their nakedness discovered, and curses were put on their posterity. History repeats itself.

Noah was a righteous man, not a faultless man. The flood had removed sinners from the Earth, but it had not removed the sin in Noah's life, for the capacity to do evil remained. Just why he removed his garments (Gen 9 v 21) is not stated, neither is it absolutely clear what his son Ham had done to him, but it drew a terrible retribution. *Gen 9:22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. Gen 9:23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. Gen 9:24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.*

Some commentators suggest that Ham had deliberately mocked his father and then went out to relay the story to his brothers, who out of decency went in and covered him without looking. We have no certain knowledge that this was so. What becomes clear later on in the law of Moses is that it is wrong

to expose yourself to God and to ones 'near kin'. *Exo 20:26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon. Lev 18:6 None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD.*

What though is wrong with nudity? Surely it is the natural state of man, the state of creation? Man first covered himself not out of modesty but out of guilt.

It was sin that caused Adam to make a covering for his loins, to mask his procreative organs and cover the generations to come from the gaze of God. Ham had in a manner of speaking, seen Noah's guilt, which perhaps was only God's prerogative. Was Ham being punished for playing God or mocking his father?

Yet it was not Ham who was immediately punished, it was his son Canaan. The son who saw his father's nakedness, was punished in his son, but there were blessings for the other sons who behaved seemly. The Shemitic people come out on top and the other nations are servants and tenants. There can be no doubt that the Judao-Christian ethic has been a massive force in shaping the development of the World.

### **The Ends of the World.**

It is commonly held that the ancient earth consisted of a single continent, Gondwanaland or as it is more commonly known today Pangea (all earth). If you cut out the shapes of current continents, you will find that they fit together just like a jigsaw puzzle.

At some stage, they began to drift apart and subsequently collide causing the crust to fold and produce vast mountain ranges. Matter was drawn under the colliding continental plates (subduction) and given out where they move apart (mid-Atlantic ridge). The science of plate tectonics shows that along these collision boundaries violent events occur, volcanoes and earthquakes. I am sure we have all heard of the San Andreas Fault in California, which has regular quakes as the land slips and cracks under the great forces moving the plates.

Continental drift was disreputable in the early 20th century, because geologists realised the forces required to crack the super-continent apart were cataclysmic. Darwinists do not like cataclysms! One theory suggests that the mechanism that caused the breakup of Pangea was the build up of polar ice caps. The result was similar to squeezing an egg in a vice, a very rapid crack propagation.

I mention this for a number of reasons. Firstly, it would have been convenient to muster the animals if the old world was a single continent. Secondly, if drift was the product of the cataclysm, with the fountains of the deep breaking up, then the mechanism that produced high mountains (Everest) did not necessarily exist pre-flood, and therefore the volume of water to cover the earth would have been much less. Thirdly, the post-flood drift could explain the isolation of particular populations (small groups after the flood) of creatures as they drifted apart on the continents.

However, this is all speculative, and I believe that we shall have to wait until glory to get the true picture.

What we do know is that God was extremely selective regarding the cargo of the ark. It was limited to single breeding pairs of unclean animals and 7 breeding pairs of clean animals. *Gen 7:2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.* This suggests that the concept of ceremonial cleanliness existed before the Levitical priesthood. Such distinctions, therefore, are not the sole possession of the nation of Israel, but were the property of all races of men.

Considering the potential population of the world at the time of the flood, we see that only a very small part of it was saved, 'few' as Peter says. *1Pe 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.* It reminds us that the way of life is found by few people. *Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Mat 22:13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.*

There are millions now who week after week meet and congregate in churches, people who think that they are Christians but do not know the calling of God and who have not found the way of life. What will they feel at the end of the world? What is the sequence leading up to the end of the world?

It will sneak up upon us as a thief. *2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned.* By this I take it that it will be marked by its ordinariness with life going on very much as any other day. *Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

People will not expect it and suddenly, there it will be, staring them in the face. Christ will reappear in the clouds and will appear to all eyes (*Mat 24 v 30ff*) with the sound of a trumpet. *Act 11:1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 1Co 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

In the midst of all of this activity, the descending Lord, the throng of angels will appear the dead in Christ. *1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the*

*Lord.* This is known as the general resurrection whereupon the dead outside of Christ are raised for judgement.

Believers appear before Christ at His throne. *2Co 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.* The greek word does not contain the word judgement, and I do not believe that Christians are judged. *Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* I suggest that Christians appear for rewards and the unbelievers for sentencing to eternal damnation. *1Co 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Rev 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

Just as Noah was safe from the cataclysmic events going on about him, because he was hidden in the ark, so shall the Christian be, because He is hidden in Christ. The ark is a type of Christ, it protects from the effects of judgement, it is a refuge in the storms of life and it will bring us to the new world.

In the new heavens and the new earth, the creature will also find its freedom just as they did when they landed safely on the mountain. *Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

*Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

### **The New World Discovered.**

The waters prevail over the earth for 150 days and the ark settles, or more correctly, rested on Ararat. *Gen 7:24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days. Gen 8:4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.*

The ark had finished its work of deliverance and the date was the seventeenth day of the seventh month. Is this significant? The Jewish new year (Rosh Hashana) takes place in what is our October (Tisri).



This is the start of the civil year. Israel also had a religious New Year starting around what is our March. The Passover (and the crucifixion) took place on the 14th day of the first month (Nisan) of the religious year calendar or the 14th day of the seventh month of the civil year calendar. *Exo 12:2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.* On the basis of Noah reckoning from the civil calendar, the religious New Year having not yet been instituted, the 17th day of the 7th month would correlate with the day of the resurrection, 3 days after the Passover!

Peter reminds us of the transition between the old and the new world, the world of the first Adam and the world of the last Adam. *2Pe 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 2Pe 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

The roof of the ark is rolled back and the raven is released to see if the land was dry. *Gen 8:7 And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.* You will note from Leviticus that the raven is an unclean animal. *Lev 11:15 Every raven after his kind;* It is the clean animal the dove, that brings back the token that the flood has abated and that things are beginning to grow again about one year from the start of the flood.

I imagine that the whole environment had changed dramatically. There would now be winds and storms. The temperature would also be less even. Immediately after the flood it is quite likely that there were plenty of rotting corpses lying around, a solemn reminder of God's judgment.

God instructs Noah, as He did Adam to go forth and multiply and Noah responds by offering a sacrifice of the clean animals. *Gen 8:17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. Gen 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

It is no doubt the basis upon which all transactions should be made. At the heart of sacrifice is the acknowledgement that one is an unworthy sinner. Additionally, that another can act as a worthy substitute and that this act pleases God and acts as a source of blessing. It is also a statement of commitment of one's way to The Lord. We often use the term commitment to define our attitude to a particular circumstance, committed for instance to do a particular task. We should stop and ask ourselves if that commitment involves God? I am sure that we have many failures in our lives because we leave God out of our plans.

The smell of the offerings, far from being obnoxious, was an odour of rest to The Lord. The response is that the curse upon the ground is removed. *Gen 8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. Gen 8:22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

The Lord observes that man's heart is evil from his youth and perhaps that a curse does nothing to improve this situation. Burdening the sinner does not help his search for truth. Grace bears the burden, shares the load. *Mat 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. Mat 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* This act of God to Noah and to all mankind in consequence is a gracious act.

Noah is also reminded of the sanctity of human life at the hand of man or beast. *Gen 9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.* This sanctity is based upon the relationship to the image of God. Just what does this verse imply at face value?

- We are not to eat blood products.
- Those who kill men are to be killed themselves, by man.
- This command is addressed to all the inhabitants on earth.
- All men are to recognise the Creator in each other and respect this image (respecting God).
- The death penalty is both the acknowledgement of the existence of God and the creation of man.

The questions arise, is this requirement valid in the New Testament and does the death penalty for murder stand today? As we have seen in other studies (see our handbook on **WHAT DETERMINES LAW FOR CHRISTIANS?**), we have suggested that Christian laws and conduct are derived from our growing relationship with Christ, not from a set of statutes given to Moses. Does this lead us to encourage the development of a civil or religious death penalty?

I will go into this more another time (DV), but I would like you to think about it and meditate on the following issues. How do we reconcile the death penalty with revenge, forgiveness, compassion and love? How should Christians deal with personal violence? Is pacifism or non-involvement a valid christian position? If the thought of murder is as bad as the act (*implied from Mat 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*) and we don't execute people for their thoughts, should we kill people for their outward deeds? What is the highest sanction against evil that is possessed by the church? Should the church be involved in civil laws? What is the relationship between the church and the magistrate?

The subject of Christian ethics receives little attention today, because people revert to the Mosaic law for simplistic answers. As a result there are many contradictions in their beliefs. The sanctity of life, enshrined in the Law of Moses and before (at the Flood), raises other questions such as, should Christians go to war, and should Christians be involved in worldly politics? What position should we adopt?

## Capital Punishment for Murder.

Executing a criminal does nothing to bring back the victim. What then does the death penalty achieve? It delivers the criminal to the highest court of all, the High Court of Heaven.

There is no power apart from God and that power is sovereignly devolved through a structured society. *Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.*

The Christian interest in the unbelievers welfare is for our benefit in maintaining a peaceful society. *1Ti 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* We often isolate God from society and limit His sphere of operations to the church but this is wrong. It also highlights an artificial distinction that we have made between church and state whereas in reality there are two conditions of men, the believers and the unbelievers. God works among all men in order to fulfil His Sovereign will, to work out His purpose.

The death penalty seems savage, and there is often the thought that justice may miscarry and an innocent person will be executed. However, the law is the law, whatever the crime and we have no right to question the wisdom of God. The nature of the evidence must be examined carefully, but if guilt is determined the appropriate sentence must be carried out.

We must note however, that the word given to Noah was in respect of murder, whereas the death penalty was mandatory for a number of offences under the Mosaic code. For example, adultery, Sabbath breaking, bestiality, cursing father or mother, blasphemy, false prophecy, gluttony and drunkenness to list a few. If we hold to the law of Moses, we must hold to it all or not at all. It is not "pick and mix". *Lev 20:10 And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. Exo 31:14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Exo 22:19 Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death. Lev 20:9 For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him. Lev 24:16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death. Deu 13:5 And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. Deu 21:21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. Deu 21:22 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: Jas 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

If we reject the Mosaic Law in its entirety we are still left with the capital punishment for murder, since it lies outside of that covenant. Many Christians see the death penalty as part of the Mosaic law and as such reject its validity in the Christian economy, however, we see that it predated Moses by hundreds of years. In this respect it is like the laws of marriage and hair coverings. It is also a law given to all mankind and is not the sole possession of the church (as it existed at the time of the flood). *Gen 9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.*

This gives us some understanding of the validity of the role of the civil magistrate, who though not necessarily a Christian, derives his authority from God. *Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Rom 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

Christians are to live in peace with all men and as far as the world is concerned, we should be thankful that God has encouraged order in society. *2Co 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.* Many of our western laws are derived from the Judeo/Christian ethic, that is, they are a composite from the scripture, and we can feel a certain empathy with them, others are the product of 20th century humanism, and we cannot support them (i.e. abortion). Clearly we cannot support the magistrate in all things.

Paul recognises the death penalty in his society and supports it going so far as to invoke the Roman judicial system. *Act 25:11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.* Christians should not find difficulty in doing likewise as there is nothing in the New Testament to encourage otherwise.

So far we have found grounds to support capital punishment for murder, but what about other offences? Should we bring back the Mosaic Law, and its methodology, stoning and hanging? As we have seen from Acts (chapter 15) Moses is not applied to the gentiles. What grounds then, would we have for instituting the death penalty for offences other than murder?

The church does not aim to regulate its community as a kingdom of the World, rather it sees itself as the community of the Kingdom of Heaven. They are those who have passed from death to life. *1Jn 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* In this respect the death penalty has no meaning, for judgement has been passed. *Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in*

*Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Any people who continue in immorality can make no claim to be part of this kingdom and are as a consequence subject to whatever this world will lay upon them. *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.*

Unfortunately there are times when Christians are called upon to kill in order to defend their country. There is much written on what is called "the just war", but many find that their conscience will not allow them to participate in violence. Who is right?

It is not our purpose here to enter into a discussion on these difficulties, but we must recognise that they have presented problems to the saints. Christian faced Christian across many battlefields and no doubt killed each other. What did they say to each other in glory? It is a reminder that we live in an imperfect world.

### **The First Covenant.**

We observe that God establishes a covenant with Noah, but the exact nature of a covenant is not explained although I have no doubt that Noah understood its meaning.

From an examination of scripture we observe that a covenant may be a contract or agreement between two parties, binding them mutually to undertakings on each others' behalf. In the scriptures, God is one party and man the other party. The prime mover is God who graciously confers benefits upon men who commit themselves to the obligations and requirements of the covenant. In this sense the covenant is established unilaterally by God. *Gen 9:9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;* There is also a covenant where the condition rests solely with God. The Noachian covenant is of this type.

The features of Noah's covenant are:

- It is established by God.
- It is universal and extends to Noah's seed after him.
- It is unconditional since there appears no means through which the promise is to be realised,
- The sign or token is not performed by man and is not an ordinance (like circumcision). It attests the faithfulness of God,
- It is everlasting. *Gen 9:12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:*

It can be seen that man does not define the terms and conditions of a covenant. In practical terms, this means that man cannot put God under any obligations to do things for him.

The next covenant with Abraham contains three promises:

1. The possession of the land of Canaan . *Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the*

*great river, the river Euphrates:*

2. The multiplication of the seed. *Gen 17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. Gen 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Gen 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*
3. That God would be a God to him.

All nations are blessed in Abraham's seed, but it is not a covenant with all flesh (as in Gen 9 v 9 ff). The responsibility for keeping the covenant however, devolves upon Abraham and his seed. *Gen 17:10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. Gen 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. Gen 17:14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*

The sign of this covenant is circumcision, where it is even called the covenant. *Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.* This sign and covenant are not displaced by the subsequent covenant with Moses. Why? The law was added because of the transgressions and in pursuance of the Abrahamic covenant. *Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Psa 105:8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Psa 105:9 Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; Psa 105:10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Psa 105:11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: Psa 105:12 When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.*

It was all part of the process of bringing men to Christ. *Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

This Mosaic covenant again has tokens and conditions which are much more numerous. *Exo 34:28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.* They are better known as the laws of Moses, which have blessings for obedience and cursing for disobedience. *Deu 27:11 And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, Deu 27:12 These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: Deu 27:13 And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse;*

*Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. Deu 27:14 And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, Deu 27:15 Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen. Deu 27:16 Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:17 Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:18 Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:19 Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:20 Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:21 Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:22 Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:23 Cursed be he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:24 Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:25 Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen. T*

These laws are aimed to bring men into a holy relationship with God and are summed up in the words of Leviticus. *Lev 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. Lev 20:8 And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.*

The New Covenant, meaning "new" (Gk *kaine*) in the sense of newly implemented rather than just conceived, is a logical extension of the previous covenants. *Luk 1:72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; Luk 1:73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, Luk 1:74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, Luk 1:75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.* This covenant has as its token the blood of the everlasting covenant and it is like the others part of God's gracious dealings with men. *Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*

As with the previous covenants man's relationship with God is maintained by perseverance and obedience. *Joh 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* Those who claim to be New Covenanters but fail to acknowledge the practical requirements of the covenant are deceived. *Rom 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.*

The New Covenant or New Testament has many elements of the earlier covenants but they have been taken from the temporal realm and elevated into the spiritual realm, the realm of the kingdom. The rainbow of Noah, the symbol of peace is elevated to Christ our peace. *Rev 4:3 And he that sat was to*

*look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. The circumcision is no longer in the body but in the carnal nature. Rom 15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: Col 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

The law also is no longer external but internal and a principle of life. *Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.*

The changes that the covenant produces are profound and lasting. The signs of the covenant accompany the faithful, they are part and parcel of the new life and we must expect to see them. A profession of faith without the substance of the covenant is a lie.

### Speaking in Tongues.

Genesis chapter 10 starts with the genealogies of the sons of Noah who populated the world after the deluge. Among the descendants was the founder of the Assyrian empire, Nimrod, the hunter. *Gen 10:9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. Gen 10:10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.* His kingdom began at Babel or Babylon. I presume that this was the name given to the city after God had changed confounded the languages. *Gen 11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

In his day there was a single language (lip) on earth and everyone had the same words. *Gen 11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.* This is perfectly consistent with the original creation of a single pair of human beings and would be a powerful cohesive factor among men.

There is no mention of striving or warfare among the people of the earth and again we might attribute this to the common language and culture, "behold the people is one". *Gen 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.* This unity begins to express itself in an aspiration to make a permanent monument to themselves which will rise up towards the heavens, mans aspiration to be god over the world. *Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.*

Such monuments also act as a focal point since they feared that they would be scattered over the face of the earth, perhaps realising that their apostasy and days were numbered.

This represents a clear departure from a proper relationship with God and is typical of pagan religious



expression. *Isa 2:8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:* Man likes to be remembered and he cannot bear the thought that he will have passed through life and be forgotten. He elevates himself to be as God in the vain hope that something might survive. This however is all symptomatic of the spiritual darkness that clouds his being for he fails to see that his idols are demonic and that he is under the power of satan. *1Co 10:19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? 1Co 10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

The Lord gives us His diagnosis of the world situation which is just the beginning of mans' plans. *Gen 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.* The solution to disrupt the plans is brilliantly simple, namely to cut the lines of communication and the ability to understand one another and hence work together. It is the sowing of the seeds of disunity. *Gen 11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.*

However, it was not wrong that mankind should have aspirations that lead him heavenward, it was the motivation and the methodology that were wrong. The Kingdom of Heaven (" Kingdom of God" is equivalent) is not built or reached by works, but by the grace of God. You cannot see or enter this kingdom unless you are born from above (born again). *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Joh 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* The Kingdom of Heaven is reached from above not from below! It is God who must reach down for us.

This is precisely what happens in the New Testament where we see the results of Babel reversed. Part of the purpose of the gospel is to unite mankind into one body namely the Church of Christ. *Eph 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:* That gospel must be preached to every creature before the end of the world comes, which clearly requires the language barrier to be broken. *Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

This commences at the feast of Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles when they were gathered together. *Act 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Act 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Act 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* This is the

first occurrence of the phenomenon which has become central to Pentecostalism namely “speaking in tongues”. Many Christians cite this passage to justify a personal experience of this event, however, we should note certain peculiarities associated with Acts chapter 2.

- **Firstly**, there are tongues of fire (v3) that settle on each of them. It may be that this phenomenon is intended to draw us back to the Old Testament manifestation of the presence and leading of God which was Christ. *Exo 13:21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: 1Co 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 1Co 10:2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*
- **Secondly**, the "tongues" are known languages or dialects, they are not **unknown** tongues. *Act 2:8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*
- **Thirdly**, it is a group phenomenon, rather than an individual experience.

The purpose of the “tongues” was to reveal the great things of God. *Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Here for an instant, the events of Babel are reversed. The descendants of those ancient tribes are gathered together in Jerusalem to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and they are no longer confused. They are in a sense the refugees from the old Babylon, from which they are to be delivered.

Babylon is the ancient enemy of the people of God. Babylon was used by God to chastise the church in the Old Testament and Babylon represents her enemy in the final conflict. *Rev 18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.* In that conflict she is not allowed to survive.

*Rev 18:8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. Rev 18:9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Rev 18:10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*

### **The Father of the Faithful.**

The scriptures abound with references to this patriarch, over 200 in all, but perhaps the greatest accolade is that he was called "the Friend of God". The context is significant and I believe an encouragement to us all. The words follow the statement that Abraham was justified by his actions when he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar. *Jas 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Jas 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? Jas 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend*

of God. *Jas 2:24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* I believe that we too can be friends of God when we show that self same willingness to follow God's word. The request that led to that friendship was indeed strange but we shall come back to consider that later.

But what of the man's origin? He was born in Mesopotamia in Ur of the Chaldees, modern Iraq, south of Babylon near modern Basra (north of the marshes). *Act 7:2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, Act 7:3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Act 7:4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.*

He is variously referred to as a Chaldean, an Amorite and a Hebrew. *Gen 14:13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.*

Abraham lived in the middle of a pagan society where they served other gods. *Jos 24:2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.* Not just one god but many gods. There were no Christian churches or Jewish synagogues to worship in and nothing to encourage his faith. There was no bible as such for him to read. His father was a practicing pagan and it seemed that there was no way out of that downward spiral into darkness. Yet God appeared and chose him from all the rest of humanity to be the progenitor of His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The relationship that he developed with God, as we shall see, was to mirror the suffering of the Heavenly Father. I believe that through the circumstances of his life, which exhibited so much typology, he became perhaps one of the few people to personally understand the suffering and sacrifice of God.

God revealed Himself to Abram, but how? When the "God of glory" (the only places the term is used in scripture) appeared to Abram, we might suppose this to have been the 'Theophany'. *Act 7:2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, Psa 29:3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.* In the plains of Mamre the Lord 'appeared' (the same word) and had a meal with him. *Gen 18:1 And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;* It was clearly a visible manifestation.

The Lord took this man away from the pagan background to prepare him for service and to become an example to all of faithfulness and receiver of justification by that faith. *Rom 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

He became a nomad, and for the whole of his life after the Divine call, never had a permanent abode.

*Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

The reason for this was that he was so fixed upon his heavenly home that he made no effort to establish himself in this world with one exception. He purchased a cave for the burial of his wife Sarah. *Gen 23:9 That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a burying place amongst you.*

God promised to make a mighty nation from this man Abram, the nation of the Hebrews. *Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: Gen 14:13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.* The name Hebrew probably derives from the word Hapiru, meaning 'one from beyond', somebody who had crossed over. The Hebrews were originally Babylonians who had emigrated, which is significant for the faithful people of God, for we have all crossed over from this world to the next.

"Come ye out of her my people" (Rev 18 v 4), cries the evangelist John, who echoes the cry that rang down the ages. This does not mean the earthly city of Babylon, which would severely limit the scope of the call. Indeed the early church did not neglect the earthly city from its evangelism or regard it as beyond redemption. *1Pe 5:13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.* Babylon is I suggest the culture, a system of humanistic values. It comprises paganism, humanism and wealth for its own sake. Abram was to learn this new system of values and be responsible to hand them down to his descendants.

What sort of man was this Abram? I will speculate. I suggest that he was an imposing character who by the faith given him was unshakable, even to the extent that he was prepared to sacrifice his own son for the pleasure of his God. **When he had a clear word from God he was unshakable.**

In matters where he had little leading, he was seen to waver, such as when he went down into Egypt (Gen 12) and feared for his life, denying Sarah as his wife. He was not particularly strong with his women and suffered the consequence with domestic intrigue and discord. It is an observation I make that throughout scripture, strong men have often been brought down and stumbled because of their inability to handle strong women!

Abram was a leader who gathered men around him and was also capable of taking a lead against his enemies. He was not afraid to dirty his own hands. He was also a loyal man, particularly to his family (see Lot) and was generous to a fault. He lived in times when revelation was not as well developed as it is now, for he had no written record to guide him. We should not judge him harshly on this account. As

one dear old saint (C D Alexander) once said to me, "He was writing the scripture through his own experience". We are inexcusable if we make the same mistakes.

### **The Calling and the Calling Back.**

*Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

*Gen 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.*

Abraham was not a young man when he made his exodus from his homeland he was 75, but he still had a hundred years before him. *Gen 12:4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. Gen 25:7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.* He did not travel on his own, but took his family, his nephew and servants with him. *Gen 12:5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.*

Eventually, he arrived in the land of Canaan to a place called Shechem or Sichem. *Gen 12:6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.* This was to be the place where Joseph's bones were brought out of Egypt and laid to rest (Josh 24 v 32), and it also became a priestly city of refuge (Josh 20 v 7ff) where the manslayer could find sanctuary (Num 35 v 6). *Jos 24:32 And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. Jos 20:7 And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. Num 35:6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities.*

Canaan, the land of the heathen was being prepared for the people of God, so few at this time, but in 400 years or so they would number more than 2,000,000 as they flooded in.

There Abram built an **altar** and **called** upon the Name of the Lord. *Gen 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.* The two (altar and calling) go together. The altar is for sacrifice in order to propitiate God. *Gen 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. Gen 8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of*

*man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*

The idea behind animal sacrifices is that it is substitutionary. *Joh 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* It is the sinners admission that he is guilty and worthy of death and that there is one worthy to bear the penalty. This is substitutionary atonement.

It is also propitiatory, that is it appeases the wrath of God. The idea that the primary attribute of God is love, fails to take into account the concept that sinners are in the hand of an angry God (For example *Num 11:33 And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.*). Love does not cancel anger it activates mercy and designs propitiation, the means whereby God's wrath is appeased. *1Jn 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1Jn 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

It is by this confession, the offering of sacrifice, that man is forgiven.

There is a thought current among men that we should be unconditionally forgiving at all times. I point out that God is not. He doesn't forgive unless man seeks forgiveness. If men do not seek, they do not get. We can only truly forgive another person if they confess their error and seek forgiveness. That is true forgiveness.

Through sacrifice, a man can enter into communion with God. He is then in a position to return God's call. This expression is used many times of mans cry of desperation when in distress. *2Sa 2:7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them. Psa 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Psa 118:5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. Lam 3:55 I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.*

It is also used of ordinary communication and it suggests that men can and should call upon the Lord.

They must also know who they are talking to, for God has a name. Abram called upon the Name of the Lord. The Name, is not just a single attribute, it the revealed character of God. *Exo 6:3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.* In our eyes that Name grows as we grow in the knowledge of God. *1Jn 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

Abram found a special place where he would meet with his God under His terms. He desired to talk with his God and was prepared to make time to talk. He was also prepared to make sacrifices. In all of this he

is an example to us and worthy of the title "father of faith" and we can follow in his footsteps. *Rom 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*

There should be two sacrifices apparent in our lives. The first is Christ's sacrifice for us. *2Co 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* Clearly the first leads to the second, that is, life in Christ leads to Christ in one's life.

The second sacrifice is that which we make. *Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* It is our commitment to Him whereby all else is subservient. If we have a genuine commitment to Christ and not just a verbal assent, Christ will be the priority of our life. *Mat 10:36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. Mat 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Mat 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Mat 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* Jesus tells us a story of a great feast where men began to make excuses for not attending and in the end were never allowed to attend.

*Luk 14:17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. Luk 14:18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Luk 14:21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Luk 14:22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. Luk 14:23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. Luk 14:24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

Abram never refused the challenges that God presented him with, such that he was prepared to go where God wanted when God wanted and how God wanted. If churches and Christians are feeling a lack of communion with God it may well be a direct reflection of their own lack of commitment to God. I think that it is true that you get out of Christianity what you are prepared to put into it.

## From Faith to Fear

The passage before us appears to show Abram in a bad light, if he is not acting under Divine guidance. If he is acting under Divine guidance, then we see certain established principles, such as marriage, being undermined.

Abram is motivated by self protection, not necessarily because he is afraid of death, but perhaps because he thinks he will lose the promise. *Gen 12:13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:*

He later attempts to implement this by having children through the handmaid, which action is recognised as wrong by Sarah. *Gen 16:1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. Gen 16:2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. Gen 16:3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. Gen 16:4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. Gen 16:5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.*

This is a common behaviour in scripture. Men often feel that God's plans require man's support as in the case of Uzzah, who paid with his life. *2Sa 6:6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 2Sa 6:7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.* Jacob seeks to get the birthright by guile rather than to trust God's fulfilment in His own time. *Gen 25:33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.*

Fear or anxiety, is one of the devils biggest weapons and it brings a snare with it. *Pro 29:25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.* Why did Abram fear the Egyptians? As it turned out, they were quite reasonable people, but somehow he had got it into his head that they would kill him because they fancied his wife, who was beautiful or fair. *Gen 12:11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:*

This statement is strange, because Sarah was quite old by today's standards. In Genesis chapter 17 we understand that Sarah was about 10 years younger than Abram. *Gen 17:17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?*

NOTE: It is from Genesis 17 verse 5 that Abram's name is changed to Abraham, *Gen 17:5 Neither*



*shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

Abram was 75 when he left Haran. *Gen 12:4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.* This means that Sarah was about 65 years old and the fact that she was attractive may reflect the fact that immediately after the flood the aging process had not become as severe as it is today for the same age range.

When Abram says that Sarah is his sister, he employs what we sometimes (and wrongly) call a "half truth". She was in fact his half sister, the daughter of his father's other wife. *Gen 20:12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.* His intention was clearly a deception and a denial of his own marriage so that he would escape being killed. It does not seem to trouble him that such an action is an encouragement to adultery. To avoid murder he resorts to adultery and surely this cannot be right. It also brings into question how much love he had for Sarah.

Considering that Egypt was a large place, it is strange that these travellers come to the attention of Pharaoh but having done so, the king of Egypt is very kind towards Abram. If pharaoh was such an ogre, as Abram expected, why did he bother to show kindness at all? He could just as well have taken Sarah, single, as married, but he doesn't.

In fact Pharaoh is an honourable man who when he becomes aware of the true circumstance sends Abram away. *Gen 12:19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.* Pharaoh clearly acted in ignorance, but the cause of the perverse providence that falls upon his house is recognised or interpreted to him. *Gen 12:17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.* Clearly, God did not intend to destroy the man, but as we shall see, there was no lesson brought home for Abram to learn.

This should cause us to consider that we may become the target of judgement due to the sin of another person. We might unwittingly become embroiled in the deceptions of others. If sickness should strike us it may be that we should examine our acquaintances!

I suggest that Abram never learned a lesson, and apparently, God never made it an issue with him, for he does exactly the same thing some 23 years later.

*Gen 20:1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. Gen 20:2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. Gen 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. Gen 20:4 But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Gen 20:5 Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she*

herself said, *He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. Gen 20:6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Gen 20:7 Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine. Gen 20:8 Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. Gen 20:9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. Gen 20:10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? Gen 20:11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. Gen 20:12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. Gen 20:13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. Gen 20:14 And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. Gen 20:15 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. Gen 20:16 And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reprov'd. Gen 20:17 So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children. Gen 20:18 For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.*

There is perhaps more instruction for us here. It is, that God does not **always** openly rebuke or correct us when we do wrong. There are some people who, failing to accept the teachings of scripture and say "if God doesn't want me to do this He will stop me", hoping for direct intervention. There is no guarantee of this. I recall a story about the preacher Spurgeon. A young woman deeply in love with an unbeliever was convinced that she could marry the man and bring him up "to her level". The burly preacher, Charles Spurgeon, got the woman to stand on a table and said, "Now pull me up to your level". He made the point.

But what if that unbelieving man had married the believing girl? How would they have interpreted any suffering that God brought into their lives? No doubt they would have blamed everything except their own folly!

Why then did God not bring Abram's actions to account? There are many possibilities and we should always bear in mind God's wider plans, rather than have our own parochial view. Samson's short comings were used by God to take occasion against the Philistines and it was this weakness that became his downfall. *Jud 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* God did not change him but that did not mean that he was right!

## Separation.

In the process of time Abram becomes a rich rancher and his nephew Lot is equally prosperous. *Gen 13:2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.* As a result of this concentration of people and cattle, the land becomes overburdened and trouble breaks out between the herdsmen. This eventually issues in a split, albeit amicably, between the major players and I would suggest that this is part of God's plan to isolate Abram in preparation for the coming blessing.

This strife leads in turn to expansion and it has a parallel in the church. Many Christians think that division is a bad thing and will attempt to avoid it at any cost. Peace must be maintained! In that familiar chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians, between 'hair coverings' and 'The Lord's Supper' is a section dealing with division. *1Co 11:17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 1Co 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 1Co 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*

Paul has praise and rebuke for the Corinthians. *1Co 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.* The rebuke is for the lack of unity in the church, which is coming together for worse rather than better. The outward gathering is of little value if the inward preparation is absent and a disorderly church is under the judgement of God. *1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* Let us never be so arrogant as to think that we are exempt these sanctions and may they act as a spur to order within the church.

It was also a good thing that there were men like Paul who were prepared to stand up and challenge malpractice and immorality so that the quality of church life was improved. I have not heard of any churches invoking the sanction of excommunication for immorality, but I have heard of many churches where fornication is tolerated! *1Co 5:3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 1Co 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1Co 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* If we are to be Christians in the New Testament mould, we have on occasion, to make strong decisions. *Pro 27:5 Open rebuke is better than secret love.*

Where there is disunity in the church, it signifies at least two things. Firstly, that there is considerable room for growth. *Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:* The measure of Christ is lacking and this may in part be due to the lack of sound ministry. *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

There are ministries that aim to change people and there are ministries which merely entertain. The

former is like a visit to the doctor, the latter is like a visit to the cinema.

Secondly, disunity may be the breeding ground from which leaders emerge. The divisions in Corinth were part of God's process of approving leaders (v 19). Paul saw 'sects' or 'heresies' as a natural part of the growth of a church. At least it meant that things would begin to be sorted out.

So then, we should not regard splits, divisions and separations as either bad things or unusual things in the church, because it is often God's way of moving us along. God moved Abram along.

There is a wicked saying in vogue today that says 'if it feels good, do it'. People are motivated by their own self gratification, fuelled on the spur of the moment, just as Eve saw the forbidden fruit. *Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.* Yet how short sighted were those eyes! They could not see the awful consequences for humanity as a result of that sudden pang of desire.

Lot's choice of land is also based upon an outward assessment. In those far off days the land was not the waste of desert that it is today and it seemed a good place to live. *Gen 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.* But what were the consequences? In the course of time he fell victim to a local war (saved by the goodness of Abram), lost his credibility in his family, lost many of his relatives and his wife, and also his property. *Gen 19:14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.* His life began a downward spiral because his original decision does not focus on the morality of the association with Sodom, it was based upon the short term benefit.

How can we make good business decisions? The writer of Proverbs gives us some advice. *Pro 15:16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Pro 15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. Pro 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right. Pro 17:1 Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.*

There is a gain in this world that cannot match the value of the soul and in all our dealings we must ask "what damage can this do to my soul?" We are guardians of our own soul and it is the most precious thing that we own. *Mat 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

We must also submit our plans to God for approval. *Psa 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Pro 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.* This does not mean that we have no freedom to develop ideas, it means that our ideas require Divine backing if they are to succeed.

It is good to remember that God's sovereignty does not remove the need for responsible actions on our part. We must outwork our salvation as God works in us. *Php 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

May He richly bless all that we endeavour to achieve in His Name.

### Blessings that count

The chapter before us introduces us to the fact that there existed a royal priesthood in the land of Canaan long before the Exodus, when the Levitical priesthood came into being. This priesthood is the ancient order of Christ and its origin is not recorded in the Hebrew scripture. *Heb 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* Clearly, the scripture does not intend to record every occurrence of God's dealings with mankind no matter how fascinating these would be. It also cautions us against saying that if things are not written in the Bible, then they never happened.

Melchizedek is the king of Salem or Zion, the city of God. *Psa 76:2 In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.* The name Melchizedek means King of Righteousness. *Heb 7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;* Salem, meaning peace also appears to be the same place as Jerusalem. *2Sa 5:7 Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. 2Ch 5:2 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.*

It would also seem that this was where Abram brought Isaac to be offered to the Lord. *Gen 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. 2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.*

Melchizedek is a character who mysteriously appears and promptly disappears, and perhaps for this reason he is according to scripture *Heb 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.* This means that Melchizedek is a model or type of Christ, hence there was an ancient order Christ before the Law.

Melchizedek is also mentioned in Psalms. *Psa 110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.* This is of particular interest because many of the Jews attributed the opening verse as applying to David, whereas it is in fact Jehovah (not David) speaking to the Lord Christ. *Mat 22:44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I*

*make thine enemies thy footstool? Luk 20:44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?*

Peter also shows that the Psalm does not refer to David, because David died and rotted in the grave, and the subject of the Psalm ascended into heaven to sit and reign on the throne of God. *Act 2:29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Act 2:30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; Act 2:31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.* The Psalm refers to the **resurrection** of Christ.

Tying these threads together we see that the priesthood of Melchizedek is a priesthood that is representative of the resurrection priesthood of Christ, not representative of an earthly priesthood. It is a heavenly priesthood. This may go some way to explaining the appearance of bread and wine to the conqueror Abram.

Here Melchizedek brings out bread and wine, the elements of the Lord's Supper, the elements of the New Covenant. *Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 1Co 11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

Is this significant? Does it suggest that the first covenant was already in principle 'outmoded' by the appearance of these elements, just as the act of tithing places the Aaronic priesthood in subservience to Melchizedek.

This is the thrust of the argument in the book of Hebrews which places the ministry of Christ above the service of the Mosaic Law. Hebrews also shows that the Law of Moses was not intended as the vehicle of the righteousness of God, Christ alone was. Additionally, there are indicators that the Mosaic Law, even at the time of its institution was subject to the higher rule of Christ.

This is explained in Hebrews chapter seven, where reference is made to the first occurrence of tithing. Tithing was clearly an act that acknowledges the superiority of those to whom it is given. *Heb 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. Heb 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.* In tithing to Melchizedek, Abraham is acknowledging his superiority and in the process puts Levi in subjection also.

Thus, Levi and his descendants, the Aaronic priesthood, are not superior to the priesthood of Christ, whom Melchizedek represents. In theology, this is termed **seminal identity**, and is the explanation of how God may impute something to a generation that is not physically present in a transaction.

This is how sin entered the world and how death passed to all men. *Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one*

*man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:* Notice that the scripture says, "for that all sinned", and the tense of the greek verb is active and punctilinear (that is, the event happened at a point in time not over a period of time), implying that all men were present in Adam and sinned in him at the same time! This is another example of seminal identity. It also explains how the female line does not carry the imputation (although they are sinners through their fathers), and how as a consequence Jesus Christ, born of a virgin is sinless, because His Father is not of Adam's seed, but His humanity is real because derived from His mother.

Tithing is clearly an act that is developed outside of the Mosaic Law, but is it something that is relevant to the New Testament church? We shall examine this.

## Tithing

Tithing in the Older Testament was an expression of gratitude to The Lord and a means of supporting the Priesthood and rituals of the Mosaic Law. *Gen 28:22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee. Num 18:21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

Tithing, in the case of Abram (Gen 14), was a singular payment to the High Priest Melchizedek, who as God's representative received the offering on God's behalf. There is no evidence that this was a regular religious offering before the Mosaic Law, although it has been noted that tithing was a regular practice among primitive peoples.

As the approved institutionalised giving at the time of the Exodus, tithing was centralised and became the property of the Levites because they had no inheritance in the land. It would have been delivered to the sanctuary of the Lord. This was the first tithe. *Deu 12:11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: Num 18:24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*

The second tithe or third year tithe was not taken to the sanctuary. *Deu 14:28 At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: Deu 26:12 When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;* This was distributed and eaten not just by the Levites but by the poor, orphans and widows where you resided. It has been suggested that this second tithe was in addition, rather than in place of the yearly tithe.

It was not the means whereby you dumped second quality goods on others rather it was the parading of the best that you could offer. *Lev 27:33 He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be*

*redeemed. Num 18:29 Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it.*

Under the Mosaic code of law earthly prosperity was in the main directly linked with the moral condition of the individual and nation. There were, however, poor people and these were the beneficiaries of the seventh year (land Sabbath... *Exo 23:10 And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: Exo 23:11 But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. Exo 23:12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.*).

Since the earth was the Lord's men were not allowed to mortgage the future and long term debt was discouraged by this the year of release. *Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: Deu 15:1 At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. Deu 15:2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.*

This, coupled with interest free loans to the Israelites, would have produced economic stability and very low inflation if any (weights, measures and money remained stable for millennia in the Old Testament).

When you gave your tithe, you were expressing a number of things to the Lord.

- That He is the rightful owner of your goods (you are a steward only).
- He has given you the increase.
- You are a temporary dweller in the land (tenant not owner).
- That you were not a thief.

This last statement may seem a little harsh, but that is just how the Lord describes those who withhold the tithe. *Mal 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*

There is no punishment in law for those who do not tithe as there is for example to those that break the Sabbath. So although God does not like the people who fail to tithe, He does not allow men to punish them. I assume that since tithe breaking is a particular crime against God, it rests with God to punish it.

Tithing is not imposed on the believer under the New Covenant and appeals to the Old Testament practice are not valid, particularly since tithing is inextricably linked to other aspects of legal obedience such as the observations of new moons. *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*



No writer in the New Testament appeals to the Mosaic law of tithing to encourage charity and liberality among the saints (2 Corinthians 9). Those who would impose tithing in the New Testament misunderstand the relationship between the two Covenants, Old and New.

This does not mean that Christians are to be mean in their support of what is truly the work of the Lord. If the need arises a Christian may be required to give much more than a legal tenth of his gains. In fact the New Testament is more demanding than the Old Testament and we should be ready to meet needs without being prompted by law. As such charity, not tithing, is one of the marks of a Christian. *2Co 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 1Jn 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

Because Christians are not under a set of statutes, as in the Old Testament, there is a tendency to avoid thinking about practical every day issues. The Jew would have considered details which we do not bother about. Yet we should. Christianity is exercised by the internal conscience, not the external form of law. *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

Because there is no statutory tithe does not mean that there is no giving. Many Christians use this as an excuse not to give at all. We should, and we should have purpose in this giving. The Lord loves a cheerful giver so better give a penny cheerfully than twopence with a grudge.

Charity however, is not a substitute for honest labour, so we have to be wise in the direction of our giving but we should give. I challenge you to find a cause.

### Abram's Seed

Chapter 15 of Genesis starts off with the Lord comforting Abram's fear. That fear was that he would go childless and that his steward, Eliezer of Damascus would inherit his house. We might well ask how a mere mortal could continue to be dissatisfied with a reward that was God Himself? What more could Abram want? He wanted a son or as he says "seed". *Gen 15:3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.*

There is in this story a dual fulfilment. One in Abram's own day and another in the time of Christ. The son of Abram's day was Isaac, although he wasn't the firstborn, Ishmael was. *Gen 16:4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.* While both Christianity and Islam acknowledge Abram, Islam parts company with Isaac and holds to Ishmael. What then did the term "seed" mean if Ishmael was not the seed?

We find the answer in Paul's epistle to the Romans chapter 9. Paul has been bemoaning the state of the nation, the Israelites. They had so much going for them yet many had failed to gain any advantage from

their birthright. *Rom 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* Surely the word of God had failed? No says Paul, it had not, because there are two Israel's. *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:*

This is explained in the verses that follow in terms of God's promise. There are children of God's promise and children of the flesh. There are those born naturally and those born of God's promise. The children of the promise are the seed, these are the true chosen people. God almost goes out of His way to make this point by doing the same thing with Jacob and Esau. *Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Rom 9:9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. Rom 9:10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; Rom 9:11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) Rom 9:12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.*

This seems a hard teaching but it is one which is quite clear and inescapable, namely that the choice ultimately rests with God. Men must be born from above to enter the Kingdom of God. *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

So then, we have established that the term seed has reference to people that God chooses, and it has no reference to how good or bad those people are. We are all sinners and that is why we need the forgiveness of Christ and the fact that Christ was sent into the world shows that man could not do anything to help himself.

The second and greater fulfilment of the promise of seed to Abram was in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul is writing to the Galatian church, where they had an argument over the relevance of the law of Moses to the New Testament church. The influence of the Jewish Christians had led the Apostle Peter back into the practices of the Jews. *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. Gal 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

Paul describes this practice as retrograde, since the works of law have no power to perfect the

individual. *Gal 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* That perfection comes through faith not works. *Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Gal 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Gal 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

That leaves a question unanswered. If the law cannot perfect an individual, what was its purpose in the first place? The law was a tutor up to Christ. *Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

The law was not supreme, Christ was, and the promises made to Abram were not fulfilled by the law but in Christ. *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. Gal 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*

Christ was the true seed. This explains the vision that Abram was given concerning the stars. *Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.* They are a multitude, yet they are all united in one person, Christ, the seed.

This also gives us a further insight into the precision of God's word. Jesus says that not the smallest part of a word of scripture would fail until all had been fulfilled. *Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

The Bible can be trusted because it is God's word, right down to the details. Even to the extent of the omission of a single letter. Seed not seeds!

What then motivated Abram's fear? Perhaps he could not express it other than in the need for a son, but I believe that deep inside he yearned for Christ. The loss that he expressed in his lack of an heir was the fear of a loss of Christ. Yes, Abram did know Christ, Jesus said so. *Joh 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*

So let us consider the faithfulness of God, the God who promises. His promises are given to the faithful, who will act upon them. The promise carries with it the requirement to act. It is not a matter of sitting back and doing nothing.

We may illustrate this from the life of Abraham. *Rom 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Rom 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* God promised him an heir and gaining strength from his faith he did not sit back and do nothing. He went in to his wife and as a consequence

she gave birth to Isaac. Likewise we believe that God will give us our daily bread, but that does not mean we sit under a tree, waiting for it to fall out of the sky. We go out to work. These are the works of faith and faith without works is dead. *Jas 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

### **The Basis of a Lasting Covenant.**

The word of the Lord comes to Abram in a vision. *Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.* This is an ecstatic or trance like state which may be entered from normal consciousness and it may happen in the daytime as with Abram or at night as it did with Paul. *Act 10:10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, Act 18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:*

It is one of God's more graphic channels of communication which takes an individual into another area of reality.

God had brought Abram out of his homeland to give him Canaan and although the promise of God is sufficient, yet He would give him further proof by tokens of a covenant. *Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:* The covenant involves a strange ritual of cutting some of the carcasses and walking between them. The term "make a covenant" is more literally "cut a covenant" and cutting, whether of the foreskin in circumcision or of the carcasses in sacrifice is at the root of covenant making. It involves death and separation from sin. *Gen 26:28 And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; Gen 31:44 Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.*

What do the animals signify? First let us remind ourselves that the animals are symbols of Christ, for example the heifer who sprinkles the flesh is a symbol of Christ who purges the conscience. *Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:* This is an area of scripture that we call typology, where Christ is portrayed to the Israelites and patriarchs in the Old Testament in various symbols, sometimes animals, sometimes objects and emblems (the pillar of fire, the manna, the water from the rock etc.). These animals are showing us something of Christ and perhaps the three years which we suppose Jesus to have ministered is prefigured here, to make the association of the covenant with Christ.

The heifer (its ashes) were used for sprinkling those who were ceremonially unclean, the she goat was for sins of ignorance, the ram for trespass, the turtledove and young pigeon for purification after childbirth. Therefore the covenant is framed around offerings for sin, ignorance and for cleansing. *Num 19:2 This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: Num 19:9 And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer,*

*and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. Num 15:27 And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. Lev 5:15 If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering: Lev 12:6 And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest:*

This leads us to a consideration of Hebrews chapter 9. The covenant involves the death of the testator and that is exactly what we see here in Genesis chapter 15. Abram experiences the darkness of death and scares away the creatures that would take away the covenant. *Heb 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. Heb 9:16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. Heb 9:17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Heb 9:18 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. Heb 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Heb 9:20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Heb 9:21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. Heb 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission*

Also we should note that it is God who passes between the pieces, not Abram, thereby showing that the terms are confirmed by God and not man. *Gen 15:17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:*

The short term benefits of this covenant are not to be realised for 400 years, 430 years to be precise to the day. *Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; Exo 12:40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. Why is this? One reason is laid before us in verse 16. The iniquity of the Amorites had not come to fruition.*

This teaches us that God's plan has many facets and while we would like to see ourselves in the centre stage under the spotlight, in reality this is arrogance and pride on our part. I am often wary of people who make many claims about regular special revelation in their lives, because it is a rarity of scripture.

God lets the wheat and the tares grow together as part of His plan and He does not continually weed out the evil doer. *Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* In the days of Noah, God was longsuffering while Noah built the Ark, but at the due season the judgement was meted out. *1Pe 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.* No doubt men became complacent because retribution is not immediate and as a consequence become bolder in their sin. *2Pe 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

As a child, I was brought up not to blaspheme. We were taught in Sunday School that it was wrong and until I became a teenager I could never bring myself to say certain words. Then, in bad company I started to gradually speak evil and nothing happened to me. Emboldened by this I became worse and worse. You see, because nothing happened, I thought that I could get away with it. I didn't know about the longsuffering of God and that He may overlook certain things until other components of His plan are complete. Then He returns!

The psalmist Asaph could not figure out why the wicked were doing so well in life. The answer was that they weren't because they only had a short term gain. *Psa 73:1 A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. Psa 73:2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. Psa 73:3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* When Asaph went into the sanctuary of God he got understanding. *Psa 73:17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* When Asaph got a new perspective he got the answer. We often have to get out of ourselves to see things properly.

The Amorites were getting worse and worse, but they had not reached the point of national judgement. Perhaps there was a wicked king or leader who had not yet been born and who was destined to inflict his evil on other peoples but until he came the Israelites had to languish in captivity.

There was however, one benefit in this 430 year delay. That was that the people would multiply and become a great nation numbering millions of souls.

### Waiting on the Lord

The scriptures do not always give personal details about the conversations behind the stories. Here is a suggestion if only to get us to think about the fact that we are dealing with real people and real lives.

Abraham lifted the tent flap and peered into the dark. The warm air was heavy with the odour of goat's hair and the spices that hung from the curtains that divided the interior. As his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom he saw Sarah combing her hair on the divan.

His voice broke the silence of the tent. "It's happened again," he said. Sarah could just pick out his tanned face in the darkness, the bemused look in his eyes and the slight smile lifting the corner of his mouth.

"You mean Ja has appeared again?" she said with just the slightest hint of disbelief in her voice. After all he was an old man, fit for his years, but these voices had come late in life. There they were, respectable people, lots of friends and relatives, when without so much as by your leave, they were off wandering around the middle of nowhere, no home and fighting other peoples wars.

Still she couldn't grumble, after all they had good marriage and had never wanted for anything in life. It hadn't really bothered her that they never had children because they had each other, but she knew that of late something had disturbed Abraham as he realised that he had no one to leave his possessions to. Well, it was a bit late to worry about that now, yet it was strange that a man who never looked for anything in this life had suddenly become so concerned about his inheritance?

"I've been to a place that I have never seen before", Abraham continued, "I was walking along the dune and then I was suddenly in a strange land, I didn't feel a thing, no movement, not even a breath of wind. It was so sudden but it was real". He really was testing Sarah's credulity.

"It sounds more like you fell asleep and had a dream my dear", she replied. "No!" Abraham said impatiently. "It's as I say. I had a vision. God spoke to me and said that I would have a son and that in the years to come I should become a vast nation".

Sarah took his hands and looked into his eyes. She didn't have to speak. They had known each other so long that words were often superfluous and this was one of those times when Sarah could read the sadness in his eyes and he could feel the despair rising in her. He put his fingers on her lips. "Don't even think it", he said reading her thoughts, "It's not your fault. God is merciful, but He has made this so and we must live with it. It is the will of EL".

The maid stirred in the corner of the tent. She had been listening in silence and had felt uneasy as she watched her master and his wife have this intimate exchange. If only she could find a man like him to take her away and love her for life. Sarah glimpsed her out of the corner of her eye and moved back from her husband. She spoke softly to the girl, "Hagar, I forgot you were there. Could you leave us for a moment please, we have something private to discuss".

Sarah led Abraham to the divan and pulled him down beside her. "Do you really believe that God will give you a son, my love?" She asked him. "Oh I do, I DO." he replied. "I don't know how, but I do believe that it will happen". He scratched his head as he wondered how at his age Sarah could possibly give birth now. She was past the menopause so perhaps it might not be her who would have the child. She was way ahead of him.

Sarah felt very uneasy at the thoughts that were flooding through her mind. No, surely Abraham would not be unfaithful to her. Abraham felt her tense hand and stroked it gently to reassure her that he loved her. He bent his head and kissed her gently. It did nothing to take away the fear that had now seized her soul.

They sat in silence for some time neither willing to disturb the other's thoughts. By now Sarah wasn't thinking straight. The idea of Abraham leaving her for someone else was unbearable, but there was a glimmer of hope. The old custom said that a barren wife could give her handmaid to her husband and in law any children that came out of the relationship belonged to the barren wife. It was not an ideal solution but then, it wasn't an ideal world and she really wanted to please Abraham.

Sarah broke the silence. "Look, the Lord has shut me up, that I do not bear. Go in to my maidservant, it may be that I shall be built up by her". Abraham looked up in amazement. "What are you talking about woman, surely God will fulfil His word to me in His way?". "Yes", said Sarah, "but that also means that we don't just sit around doing nothing. When we believed God in the past, we always had to do something, that's why we left Ur".

"It's not the same, Sarah", by now he was getting irritated. "God has his own times and we must trust in Him to say how and when".

It wasn't the first time in the history of the world that Eve had spoken through her daughters and the son's of Adam had been encouraged to run ahead of the Lord. But by now it was too late, for the seed had been sown in Abraham's mind. Perhaps Sarah was right after all?

### Bondman or Freeman?

The proverb of Samson engraved on every tin of Tate and Lyle golden syrup says that "*Out of the strong came forth sweetness*" (Judges 14 v 14), referring to the honey from the bee's nest in the dead Lion. Sometimes a perverse providence can be turned into a triumph or perhaps as another worldly proverb states, "every cloud has a silver lining". The events surrounding the history of Hagar and Sarah fall into this category.



Paul refers back to the event before us in Genesis chapter 16 in his letter to the Galatians. *Gen 16:4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. Gen 16:5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. Gen 16:6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. Gen 16:7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. Gen 16:8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. Gen 16:9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. Gen 16:10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Gen 16:11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. Gen 16:12 And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.*

Throughout Galatians, Paul has been labouring over the legalism of the "judaizers", those who on the one hand would proclaim freedom in Christ and on the other be drawn back into legalistic observance. Paul has put the case that if one has been declared right with God by faith then one cannot be perfected by law, "having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?"

Paul continues to reason with those under law in chapter 4 (v 21ff). "Do you not hear the law?", he says. Now this is an interesting point in passing, because Paul is quoting from Genesis. The law to Paul is not just the Ten Commandments, not just the books containing the statutes of Moses such as Exodus and Deuteronomy, it also embraces Genesis. The Jewish Old Testament was divided up into three sections, the Law, the Prophets and the Writings sometimes called the TaNaC (Torah, Nabia and Chetubim) and the first five books of the Bible were the Law of Moses (also known as the Pentateuch). Every word of scripture was the word of God and its requirements binding upon the Jew, hence it was the law.

What did the law say here? The law laid down a great truth in the form of an allegory (i.e. a comparison or symbol) drawn from Abram's life. This shows us that scripture may have hidden and subtle messages for us in many forms, for example we are already familiar with the typology of Christ.

The message that unfolds is that the two boys represent two covenants, one from earthly mount Sinai and the other from Jerusalem which is above. *Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. Gal 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* In the allegory Paul aligns the earthly Jerusalem with Mount Sinai as a place which genders bondage.

How strange it is that many Christians look towards the earthly Jerusalem as a future focus of worship and restoration for the earthly Jews, against the general run of New Testament comment. The New Testament directs us to heaven in Christ by such phrases as, "seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus", and "You have come to mount Zion", by which we see no place for the earthly or as Paul terms it here in Galatians, the "flesh".

Hagar is Sinai or earthly Jerusalem and Sarah is Jerusalem above. Hagar was in bondage as a slave and Sarah was free but barren, yet she in time broke forth and was fruitful. Thus Hagar, Mount Sinai, brought forth Ishmael a slave child, the covenant of law. Sarah, Jerusalem above, brought forth Isaac, the free son, the new covenant.

Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac so those back under law were persecuting the gentile Christians. *Gal 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.* What happened then was repeating itself in Galatia, but now as then there was no place for the son of the bondwoman. The only acceptable son was Isaac, the freeman and therefore the Jews were being encouraged to cast off their Jewishness.

The Lord was also kind to Hagar in earthly terms and we have no reason to say that although she was cast out in the allegory she failed of the grace of God for it is written that she called upon the name of the Lord. *Gen 16:7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. Gen 16:13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?*

Note that the angel of the Lord is another manifestation of the Theophany, who acts as God in the promise to multiply her seed. *Gen 16:10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.*

The pregnant mother Hagar is heard of God, thus the name of her unborn child, Ishmael, a man not dissimilar to Cain.

*Gen 16:6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. Gen 16:7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. Gen 16:8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. Gen 16:9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. Gen 16:10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Gen 16:11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. Gen 16:12 And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. Gen 16:13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? Gen 16:14 Wherefore the*

*well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. Gen 16:15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.*

### God Talking to Men.

There is a hiatus of 14 years between the birth of Ishmael and the birth of Isaac according to Genesis chapter 17, which opens with the words "the Lord appeared to Abram". This raises a question. Is this the first appearance or first communication with God for this period of time? This leads us to a further consideration, namely, how much communication can we expect from God and what form does it take?

In Genesis chapter Abraham's servant goes to seek a wife for his master's son. He has a very specific prayer and before it is finished the answer arrives. God does not say a word in reply, but He answers through providence. *Gen 24:12 And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Gen 24:13 Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: Gen 24:14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master. Gen 24:15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. The servants responds with an act of worship and again there is no verbal response from God. Gen 24:26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD. Gen 24:27 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.*

The scriptures encourage us to pray 'always' or 'without ceasing' and indeed there are many things that we should be praying for, but does this imply that we will get as much a response from God as we give time to Him? *Luk 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. 2Th 1:11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 1Th 5:17 Pray without ceasing.* I do not see that scripture implies that we will, but that doesn't mean that we do not get answers to prayers or that we will feel isolated and out of touch.

There is a sense in which we have our orders and tasks to perform and so we should not expect continuous intervention from God. *Mar 13:34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. The prime directives come from the sufficiency of scripture. 2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. 1Jn 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and*

*truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are told to let the word of Christ to dwell in us richly. Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

Scripture makes quite clear what we should and should not do and so it would be quite pointless and positively sinful to pray for example, that God should show us if homosexuality is wrong! Just what sort of response would we expect? However, for many who call themselves “Christians”, this approach is quite common and the answers are sought in their feelings. It feels right they say because I have prayed about it.

The New Testament is *not* replete with examples of daily specific and direct Divine verbal communication with men. Admonition may come from the Lord, but it may be ministered by an agent, the parent for example. *Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

So just how does God communicate with men?

**Wisdom.** This is God's gift, revealing Him, preserving the individual, enabling one to be a good workman for God. *Jas 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: Pro 2:10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Pro 2:11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: Exo 35:31 And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship;*

**Moving of the Spirit.** This is God granting access to His mysteries and the means whereby God puts His law in our hearts. *2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*

**Providence.** God in His goodness governs and provides for His people, the giver of the daily bread. *Exo 16:12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God. Exo 16:13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. Exo 16:14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. Exo 16:15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. 1Ki 17:2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 1Ki 17:3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 1Ki 17:4 And it shall*

*be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*

**Dreams/Visions.** Often mentioned together, occurring sometimes in the night. It is as if the Lord does not want the eye of sinful man to see His glory and be converted by sight rather than faith. *Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: Num 12:6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. Act 18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:*

**Prophecy/Tongues.** These are spiritual manifestations for the edification of the church and the individual. *1Co 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. 1Co 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

There may be specific personal revelation not so as the individual is to avoid the future, rather that he may prepare for it. *Act 21:10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. Act 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. Act 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Act 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Act 21:14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.*

**Direct word.** This as we have suggested is not a regular manifestation in the New Testament or the Old, but it does occur. *Act 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert*

**Discipline.** This may occur through providence and the circumstances of life and through those appointed. *Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

**Knowledge/Scripture.** The mark of the new man and the mark of a man instructed by God. *2Pe 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

**Conscience.** This faculty can be developed and exercised so as to enable the individual to walk blamelessly before God hence it is in a sense a communicator of the will of God. *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. Rom 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*

**Teaching/Instruction.** This may be from scripture, or from those gifted servants who are appointed by God. *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

God speaks to us in many more ways than we might imagine, some not very spectacular, but none the less it is contact with God. If we are aware of this and employ the means available, we may feel more in contact. *Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,*

### The Roots of the Reformation

The Reformation in Europe was a period of religious enlightenment marked by a break with the mainstream Roman Catholic church. Famous persons to emerge from the 14th century include Menno Simmons, John Calvin, John Knox, and Martin Luther (with a host of other great men of faith).

Martin Luther was a catholic monk who went to Rome to do a penance. The tradition had built up in the Catholic Church that an individual could gain merit points with God by certain 'works'. These works would count towards some remission for a person in the intermediate state of purgatory. One day while going up a set of steps called Pilate's stairway, on his knees, Martin was in some confusion over the benefit of his actions. Contrary to popular myth he did not say, on reaching the top, "The just shall live by faith". *Hab 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

He apparently questioned his own actions, "can it be so?"

As the search for truth continued, Martin did come to an understanding of justification, that the just would live by faith. These words became the rallying cry of the protestant reformation, giving rise to the important doctrine, "Justification by faith". Somehow, over the centuries, this doctrine had fallen into disrepair and as a result a whole raft of alternative teachings had been developed. These teachings had become a means of abusing the common man by the priests.

Perhaps one of the main reasons that the people had not contested these errors was because of their ignorance. The reformation with its new technology, the printing press, was a major factor in breaking the cycle of ignorance because it put the bible into the language of the people and made it more widely available.

The Tyndale translation was condemned by the priests because they saw that it was showing up the mysticism and deceit for what it was and that they were losing their hold on the people. The teaching of justification had a similar effect because it took the power of forgiveness out of the hands of a specially trained elite body, the priesthood, and put it back to where it belonged, in the hands of God to be dispensed by grace.

The doctrine of justification by faith is linked to the passage before us in Genesis chapter 17. As we saw in our last study which linked us with Galatians, Paul was rebuking the Judaizers, those people who went back under the Mosaic system. His argument was that if we had received the Spirit of God through faith, it was a retrograde step to think that one could go on to perfection by reverting to works of the law.

The argument in Galatians chapter 3 runs as follows.

Abraham believed God (on many occasions) and this act of trust was a statement of his righteousness. Believers, by this token are related to Abraham and also recipients of the same blessing and gospel. Clearly the gospel is not a New Testament phenomenon. *Gen 17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. Gen 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Gen 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*

Those who remain under the works of the law (touch not or handle not) are under the curse and it is also plain that no man is justified by works of the law, and we should make a distinction here between works of law and works of faith, because works of faith are prompted by faith not law. For us Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. *Gen 17:10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. Gen 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. Jas 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*

The promises that God made to Abraham, and hence to us gentiles cannot be altered. The covenant that God made with Abraham was fixed as to its substance and was confirmed by God in Christ before the law. This remarkable statement shows that Christ was confirming a covenant years before the birth of Moses! *Gen 17:4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Gen 17:5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. Gen 17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. Gen 17:7 And I will establish*

*my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*

The Law of Moses which came 430 years later could not change or remove the previous promise. The promise came before the seal of the covenant circumcision, was administered. Because of this, we the gentiles can perfectly identify with Abraham and not have to be outwardly circumcised. *Rom 4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Rom 4:10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. Rom 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: Rom 4:12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised*

This theme of bringing the nations into the Kingdom and covenant is mentioned many times in the Old Testament but it was always resisted by the Jewish nation who felt that their relationship with God was exclusive. This is clearly seen in the Apostle Peter's attitude and he had spent 3 years with Jesus (at the most and probably only 1 year) and hadn't realised the true extent of the gospel. *Act 10:28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

There is a danger that Christians too are exclusive (indeed some sects admit it, such as the Exclusive Brethren, or Restricted Baptists). This is seen in their general unwillingness to share their faith or make any effort to get involved in the outworking of the faith. I would hate to be accused of wilfully neglecting to speak to someone, who as a consequence died in ignorance of Christ. It would be a sad commentary on my faith, for without works, it would be dead!

### **Is Anything too Hard for the Lord?**

Abraham as he is now called lives in the plains of Mamre, which is the name of his friend and confederate the Amorite. *Gen 14:13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.* You may recall that the Amorites were descendants of Canaan son of Ham, who was cursed by Noah. *Gen 10:15 And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, Gen 10:16 And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, Gen 10:17 And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, Gen 10:18 And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. Gen 10:19 And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest, unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha. Gen 10:20 These are the sons of Ham, after*



*their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.* These were among the inhabitants of the land of Canaan driven out by the Israelites. Exo 33:2 And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

As Abraham sits in his tent door, three men appear before him. *Gen 18:2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,* Now, there are a number of words used to describe men in the hebrew language and these synonyms are often hidden in the translation. The hebrew word for men here is 'enosh' which refers to mortal man. Why wasn't the word 'geber' (mighty man) used?

There are perhaps a number of thoughts which may be drawn from this. It may be that Abraham did not initially recognise Jehovah (*LORD* in the AV) since he calls him Lord (Adonai) a term of respect applicable to man or God. *Gen 18:3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:* It is only later that the word Jehovah is used and so it may be that Abraham was taken by surprise. *Gen 18:13 And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?* This is in perfect harmony with the thoughts in the epistle to the Hebrews, *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers. Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

Now you may ask how do we know that these 'men' are angels accompanying God? It appears that they go on to Sodom and they are again described as 'enosh'. *Gen 19:1 And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; Gen 19:5 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.*

From this we may infer that angels can appear quite ordinary (no wings or shining lights), such that you and I would not take a second glance at them. Also, they are quite capable of ingesting food even though they are spirit beings.

Abraham exhibits his hospitality to the visitors by preparing a meal of fine cakes (not bread) and meat from a young calf although he does not appear to sit down and eat with them. *Gen 18:6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. Gen 18:7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. Gen 18:8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.*

After the meal they have a question for the old man. The Lord promises to return and that Sarah would have a son but why not give her a son there and then? *Gen 18:10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah*

*heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.* The answer may lie in Sarah's faith which needs directing to allow her to participate in a worthy manner. The Lord is not just concerned with miracles but that we might also be in a position to receive them in a godly manner.

The old couple were well beyond child rearing and Sarah had passed through the menopause. *Gen 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.* To her it was a big joke. "After I have become worn out, have I enjoyed sexual delight and my lord too is an old man?" (v 12 Leupold's translation). She laughed 'in herself', but the all seeing God hears that laugh quite clearly. The Lord's rebuke is addressed to Abraham, not Sarah. *Gen 18:13 And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?*

What sort of relationship did they have together? Had they lived in anticipation of the earlier promise and encouraged each other in it? Obviously not. Had Abraham laboured as a good husband with the weaker vessel? *1Pe 3:5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: 1Pe 3:6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.* The implication of Peters epistle is that they were an ideal couple or at least that Sarah had respect for Abraham, but did he bless her? The New Testament goes out of its way to commend faithful men (read Hebrews chapter 11) but it does not mean that they were spotless!

Sarah, realising what she had said, became afraid and denied what she had done, but the Lord turns on her. *Gen 18:15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.* He does not say "you are a liar" which of course she was but merely reiterates her action. How embarrassing, yet the Lord does not punish her for it.

The passage before us may be summed up in the words of verse 14, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Throughout the scriptures we are confronted with situations that are hopeless from a human perspective, yet that is not the case from Gods'. Cripples, blind, deaf and the dead are restored under His power. The laws of physics are turned on their head.

This is not difficult to understand if we grasp the fact that God is the creator. By that we mean not just the builder but the architect of existence itself. If He can cause light to shine out of darkness and the seas to swarm with life, helping an old granny to have a baby is easy on that scale of complexity.

What we have is a problem with coming to terms with God's timing and sometimes His silence to our wants (not our needs)!

### **Prayer at its Best.**

As Abraham accompanies Jehovah (the Theophany) towards Sodom and Gomorrah He decides to reveal His purpose. The place you will recall was extremely fertile and beautiful and Lot had chosen it for his dwelling place. *Gen 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it*

*was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. What you couldn't see from a distance was the fact that it was a place of utter corruption. The particular sin which they are renowned for has come down into our own language as the word 'Sodomy', described in Jude as going after strange flesh. Jud 1:7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Homosexuality! There are some who call themselves Christians, who think that this deviance is acceptable in the eyes of God. They go so far as to call themselves 'gay' Christians. If however this was acceptable it is hard to see why it called down the vengeance of God, being condemned in both the Old and the New Testament.*

*There is no justification for it and in Christ all things can be overcome for the glory of God. Paul in Romans points out that the primary cause is the rejection of the true nature of the creator. Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Rom 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: Rom 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

*When men give up the image of God, He gives them up to their own excesses and they become as brute beasts. A similar thing happened to the boastful king Nebuchadnezzar, who claimed kingship in isolation from the Kingmaker. Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.*

*Such crimes do not go unnoticed by God, although the judgements may be some time in coming. The scripture records that the cry of these twin cities Sodom and Gomorrah, had come to Him and now the day of visitation was at hand. Gen 18:21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. Sin has its own voice and it makes a clear sound to God. We may well ponder the magnitude of the cry of sin from*

the multitude of cities in the world today, and realise that judgement cannot be far away.

Because Abraham was a faithful man and because he would keep the memory of God's judgement alive among his generations, God would make him privy to his dealings and through this we are privileged to listen in on one of the most powerful intercessory prayers of the Bible. *Gen 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.* It is a lesson in the power of prayer and it is a lesson in constructing our appeals to God. I have no doubt that it was motivated by the patriarchs concern for his nephew and so it also serves as an example of how we might pray for other Christians when we perceive the danger of their circumstances.

The core of Abraham's prayer is that God is righteous and as a consequence of this aspect of His nature, He must do right. It is, if we may use the term, a self limitation of God. Within the person of God we see a perfection called holiness that is not possessed in any creature but rather is given as a blessing of association with Him. Righteousness is a perfection of God that we see displayed towards His creatures who are not capable of righteousness. God loves righteousness and as a consequence He can do no wrong. *Psa 5:4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. Psa 11:7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.*

This is the focus of Abraham's plea. What he says, if there were 50 men who God reckoned as righteous in these cities, surely they would be spared destruction? Of course they would says the Lord. What about 45? Yes for them also. If there were 40, 30, 20, or 10? Yes, even for those, they would be spared.

I would say that the conclusion is that even if there was one man, God would deliver them, and there the case rests, for Lot would be safe. Not that God would avoid the judgement, rather that He would deliver the righteous and that as we shall see in the next chapter is just what happens. It is like the Last Judgement and the parable of the Tares where God separates the righteous before he destroys the wicked. *Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

This should be a comfort for each and every soul in Christ, for they will not be dealt with as other men. In Christ we are spared the judgement. *Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Abraham's prayer is an effectual and fervent prayer but we should ask ourselves, do we have such fervency? *Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Jas 5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on*

*the earth by the space of three years and six months. Jas 5:18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Jas 5:19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Jas 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.* The greek word for effectual can be transliterated as 'energetic', that is containing an element of hard work. That may be a key for us. It has been suggested that Elijah's prayer had been laid down six months in advance of his confrontation with Ahab. Compare with *1Ki 17:1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. Luk 4:25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;* Is there anything that we want so badly that we will labour before the Lord continuously until He hears us?

Is there anything that we want so badly that we are prepared to put time in to discover the nature and purpose of God in order to enhance our chances of success? For many of us prayer is reduced to trivial items of every day existence, not that we shouldn't direct our souls to them (I have in mind the Lord's Prayer). I would suggest however that the scripture encourages us to see that we can achieve even greater victories through prayer but at a higher price of greater single mindedness and greater effort. Men of prayer put away childish things.

### Lot's Wife

We now follow the two angels to Sodom where they find Lot at the gate of the city. This was the place that elders were often to be found, but there is nothing in the text to indicate that Lot was an elder. The scripture tells us that Lot was 'vexed' by the filthy conduct of the inhabitants and it may be that he sat there to warn strangers of the dangers. *2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:*

Why though we ask, did Lot continue in such a place? Why had he not moved out long ago? How could a righteous man stay there? Again we may only speculate and it may be that he felt a call to represent God in Sodom yet there may be another reason as I shall explain. If the gospel is to reach all men then Christians must be prepared to endure hardship, being in the world but not of it.

Lot persuades the strangers to stay in his house, but the Sodomites demand to 'know' the men, the word implying carnal knowledge rather than verbal acquaintance. Lot offers his virgin daughters as a sacrifice to their lust but they refuse (perhaps this is why these girls are still virgins although he does have some married daughters [v14]). In response, the angels confuse the inhabitants such that they found no entrance into Lot's house.

The response of Lot's son in laws to the impending judgement is mockery. There is something in human nature that believes in continuity, the steady state world where God is dead and cannot intervene. *Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the*

*day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. All things will continue as they have from the beginning. 2Pe 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 2Pe 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

Even Christians can be lulled into a false sense of security and lack preparation, so it is vital that we have the oil of the Spirit burning in our lives with the expectation of the coming of Christ. This is a coming certainty. *Mat 25:1 Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. Mat 25:2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Mat 25:3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: Mat 25:4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

Even Lot had to be dragged out of the city along with his wife and daughters but as we know Lot's wife couldn't resist one final yearning look back at her home. What sort of woman was Lot's wife? The scripture asks that we remember her for the days in which she lived are the same as the days preceding the coming of Jesus. Life continued as normal. *Luk 17:32 Remember Lot's wife. Luk 17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*

The implication of Luke's gospel is that this woman wanted to save her life. By this we infer that she wanted to preserve the life that she had in that awful place. She wasn't prepared to give it up! If we are prepared to lose or give up a hold on this temporal life we shall have a life beyond it with Christ in the Kingdom. It is of course easier said than done, but the challenge is there. Where do we want a life? What are we building, treasure on earth or treasure in heaven? This doesn't mean that we should not earn a good living but it does question our motives. What do we really want out of life? For sure, a hundred years from now we shall all have passed on to glory and this will be a memory but will we have made the most of the opportunity of building something that will last to God's glory?

Remember Lot's wife. Where did she come from? Using the Usher chronology in the AV Lot went down in to Egypt with Abraham in BC 1921 (Gen 13). By BC 1918 (Gen 14) he was a resident of Sodom. The events before us in Genesis 18 occur in BC 1898 some 20 years later. I speculate that his wife was either an Egyptian or a woman of Sodom and I favour the latter because of her yearning for the place. A wealthy young man would have been a prime target for a gold digger.

It would appear that he had little influence over her and it may be that she was the real reason he stayed in the place. Why did he marry her? I asked some of our boys in the Sunday School what they would look for in a wife? They said money and looks, which is in many cases par for the course. Physical reasons? Yet this is one of the most important life choices that we make and one for which we are so ill prepared. We have marriage guidance counselling, but no marriage preparation counselling! It can be one of the most expensive decisions of our lives (temporally and spiritually).

I have two criteria which I believe offer the best hope of survival and as you know I do not believe in natural compatibility. Compatibility is something you create not something you find. Firstly, I suggest that there is a common faith founded in a saving knowledge of Christ. Secondly, that there is a common commitment to solve problems biblically. By this I mean that we should find the solutions to our problems, and they do occur, on the common ground of God's word, not on our own selfish desires.

I do not think that Lot had this relationship with his wife. If he did they would have survived. As it was God divorced them! Marriage is a mirror of the church such that we in our relationships with our spouses reflect our relationship with Jesus. *Eph 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

Healthy churches have healthy marriages. It requires effort and it is probably a powerful witness in this day and age of Christ in the community.

## Incest

Things do not improve for Lot after he leaves his stricken city of Sodom. The widower is in fear of his life and moves out of Zoar, perhaps because he has acquired the reputation of a Jonah. *Gen 19:30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. Jon 1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.*

People have a habit of looking for a scapegoat when bad things happen often quite rightly, and Lot with his strange story of deliverance must have drawn attention to himself. What if it were to happen in Zoar and what if Lot was the cause?

So the man and his daughters move out into the hills and become hermits living in a cave. He clearly had not appreciated the natural desires in his daughters and they had no men to fulfil those desires. They resort to subterfuge.

Now, with the wisdom of hindsight and the advantage of increasing revelation of the will of God, we can at this position in time judge the actions as wrong but what did they know at the time? The biblical account of creation leaves us with a problem as to who the sons and daughters of Adam married. *Gen 4:16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. Gen 4:17 And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.*

The theology of redemption requires a federal head, namely Jesus Christ. *1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* If sin enters the world by one man and its consequence, death, the whole family of man must derive from Adam. *Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by*

*one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:* There is no room for other parallel creations. If there were the logic of it all requires that there are other saviours to redeem each fallen generation of men. It is this simple linkage with Adam that makes the whole teaching knit together perfectly. One fallen man brings sin into the world and one righteous man lifts the burden.

We can only conclude that the sons of Adam married the daughters of Adam. Genetically there would have been nothing against this however morally abhorrent it now seems. The gene pool would have been diversified, much as happens with the brute creation. The introduction of sexual mores however, is linked with the development of the nation of Israel and the hierarchical order inherent within it (for example Lev 18 and Lev 20). The closer you were to God, such as the Levites, the greater the restrictions in who you could marry (Lev 21).

We are now presented with the question, what laws did the patriarchs have governing sexual relationships? The prime directive in Genesis is one man one woman and this is the norm in the New Testament. *Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* However, the New Testament does appear to allow polygamy among the gentile converts (those who already had more than one wife before they were converted). This is implied by the statement of Paul regarding Eldership limiting Elders to monogamous relationships. *1Ti 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Tit 1:6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*

Abraham married his half sister, Sarah and this does not appear to constitute an offence at this time although it is later expressly forbidden. *Gen 20:12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. Lev 18:9 The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. Lev 18:10 The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness. Lev 18:11 The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.*

This teaches us that some laws are mutable, that is, they may be changed according to the purpose of God, just as the laws of cleanliness are changed or trivial grounds for divorce. *Act 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: Act 10:10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, Act 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Act 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. Act 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. Act 10:15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. Mat 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your*



*hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

From these examples, we see that we must exercise great care in our attitude to our ancient brothers with respect to judging their actions. It is wrong to judge those before the Mosaic Law by the standards of the Mosaic Law. It is also wrong to apply the rigours of the Mosaic economy to the New Testament Christian. *Act 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. Act 15:21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

My conclusion is that although we now view Lot's daughters actions as wrong, at the time there was no reason to condemn them and indeed we do not find that God takes issue over their action, rather, God preserves them in the land of Canaan. *Deu 2:9 And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.* That said, it does not appear that Lot would have been a willing party because the daughters get him drunk in order to achieve their end.

We see that the Moabites form part of the lineage of Christ through Ruth and Boaz (Read the book of Ruth). This woman was faithful to the God of Israel and clearly respected and invoked the laws of heredity. *Rth 1:16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:* Thus the child of incest is eventually merged with the seed of Abraham.

God's ways are truly past our understanding, for in the line of the perfect man Jesus are many who have sinned and fallen by the way but not fallen from the grace of God. This is a lesson in forgiveness, for Christ came to seek and save that which was lost?

This week I spoke to a Christian whose faith had been assaulted by the devil to the extent that the love of God had become a personal problem. It was not a question of forgiveness or salvation in Christ but an occasion to doubt of the Father's love. My encouragement was that God loved us before we were Christians. When we were enemies he showed His love towards us, then we most certainly will be saved having become part of His family in Christ. *Rom 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

### **True Lies.**

Lot fades from history and the focus is again upon Abraham, who embarks upon a journey to the capital city of the Philistines, Gerar near the Egyptian border. The term Palestine is derived from Philistine. Why he went is not stated, but it turns out to be a repeat performance of his previous visit to Egypt. *Gen 12:10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn*

*there; for the famine was grievous in the land. Gen 12:11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Gen 12:12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Gen 12:13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.*

Abraham went to this ungodly place and feared for his own life but he does not appear to be concerned for the consequences to Sarah, just as long as he was preserved. *Gen 20:11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. Gen 20:12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. Gen 20:13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.*

One might have thought that as marriage is an example of the relationship between Christ and the Church Abraham would have protected Sarah but he doesn't. *Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

It also appears that there is a general acceptance that once a man has married a woman it is a sin to take her from her husband, hence there is some understanding of the concept of adultery. *Gen 20:4 But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Gen 20:5 Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. Gen 20:6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. Gen 20:7 Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.*

Abraham is deliberately putting his wife in the path of sin. Why though, we may also ask, does she so willingly undertake to do this? It has even been suggested (by Morris) that Sarah may even have been carrying Isaac at this time, which may have rejuvenated the 90 year old and made her attractive to Abimelech.

We do not find that God rebukes Abraham for this action and there appears to be no hindered communion, since Abraham's prayers are heard. *Gen 20:17 So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.* In fact it is revealed to us that Abraham was a prophet, which verse teaches us that prophets are not merely future tellers or forth tellers, they are intercessors. *Gen 20:7 Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.* Prophets have a channel of communication open to God, not just from God.

This chapter is not without its difficulties and it highlights the many moral conflicts that we find in life and that many of our judgements are not warranted by the Lord. Despite the lie, God protects Sarah, both her life and Abraham's are spared, the innocent or ignorant party, the Philistines are threatened with death. It is as if there is a greater plan at work which under the purpose of God is justifiable, despite the methods employed.

Phinehas, for example, kills the Israelite and the Midianite woman out of jealousy. *Num 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Num 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; Num 25:8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. Num 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.*

### The Zeal of Phinehas

*Num 25:10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Num 25:11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.* There is no judicial hearing or stoning. Yet he acted out of Godly jealousy and stayed the plague. His action had totally reflected the mind of God and he had become God's tool of judgement.

It may seem that Abraham was only telling a part truth, what some would call a 'white lie', in that Sarah was indeed his sister but that does not remove the fact that she was compromised. So to what extent is one obligated to tell the truth? The ninth command warns us not to bear false witness against our neighbour but is there a limit to this? *Exo 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.* Life's moral choices are never always black and white, a choice between absolute right and absolute wrong. We are also inclined to make our moral purity the central issue, rather than the fulfilment of the purpose of God. This is well illustrated in the life of Rahab the prostitute (Joshua chapter 2).

Rahab lies to protect the Israeli spies. *Jos 2:4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:* She could have told the truth and given the men up to death, she could have remained silent but she chose to protect them and lie. It is one of those awful moral dilemmas with a choice of evils (David had this choice after he numbered the people). *2Sa 24:10 And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.*

Rahab's decision is based upon her absolute faith in God and His purpose and not the grey area she

found herself in. Naaman the leper took back his absolute faith to his homeland, yet in his civil role he was compromised by the king, yet he knew this and sought forgiveness, he did not shut himself off from the king to void the challenge. *2Ki 5:18 In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.*

Rahab's choice was to lie and commit treason to see the spies saved or give up the godly men to certain death. For her choice she is commended (not for lying) and it was according to James an outworking of her faith. *Jas 2:25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?* This faith is remembered in the epistle of the Hebrews. *Heb 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.* For this she is rewarded and becomes an ancestress of Christ. *Mat 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;* What was better? That Rahab come out and say "I never tell a lie" or that I saved two godly men?

There are also times when wicked men forfeit the right to the truth and God will withhold it from them. *1Ki 22:15 So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 1Ki 22:16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD? 1Ki 22:17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. 1Ki 22:18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? 1Ki 22:19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. 1Ki 22:20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 1Ki 22:21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. 1Ki 22:22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. 1Ki 22:23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.*

These men do not readily receive the truth, so they are deluded and consequently damned. *2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 2Th 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Now I am not suggesting that this is a *carte blanche* to withhold the truth as it suits us. It does however suggest that there are occasions when one has an understanding of God's purpose in a particular situation, that is where one has faith, and that the situation is one where our morality is compromised. The answer is clearly not the preservation of our own righteousness, but the implementation of God's purpose.

### Casting Out

The miracle of Isaac is that he was a child born out of time and that the circumstances of his birth call forth faith in Abraham's life. Let us remind ourselves what biblical faith is. Faith gives substance to hope, evidence of the invisible and it comes by hearing the word of God. *Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

This suggests that faith is given by God and gives us confidence in things to come, that are as yet invisible. *Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

It was this confidence that enabled Abraham to perform and it rested on a specific word from God. *Rom 4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: Rom 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Rom 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. .... Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. .... Gen 17:16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Gen 17:21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. .... Gen 18:10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.*

Many Christians get “feelings” about things to do and call these feelings faith but on examination there is no word of God supporting the feelings. Such feelings may be the prompting of the conscience but as we have seen, the conscience is not infallible (see our handbook notes on CONSCIENCE).

The birth of Isaac (meaning: laughter) brings a crisis and conflict with the other sibling Ishmael but it is one of God's making. Abraham is clearly hurt by Sarah's attitude (but God intervenes to instruct him to put his son out). The explanation for this action is given many centuries later to illustrate both the purpose of law and election. *Gal 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.* Notice that God's word in Genesis is called scripture in Galatians! This was clearly

difficult for Abraham because he loved his son Ishmael dearly but he was prepared to make the forfeit because it was what God wanted and as we see later he is tested again with Isaac. How would we react to such a challenge?

What it must lead us to accept is that God's plan is the overriding consideration, after all as He said earlier to Abraham, "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward". *Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

At the end of the day Christianity is not about earthly relationships that pass with the years (even marriage ceases) but about an eternal relationship with the Almighty. We must sometimes suffer in this life, some much more than others, in order that God's purpose comes to pass. It may be years or even centuries, before the full extent of the actions are understood and the events lead to fruition but that is not our worry.

Abraham had to make sacrifices and give up things dear to him. There was in his life a 'putting off' and a 'putting on' and so there is for us also. Christianity is not simply about dumping sin upon Jesus such that we can continue to live our lives in the same old ways. Romans chapter 6 explains the consequences of the new life and the changes required on our part.

If we stand in the grace of God, things are required of us, and most of all it is a sacrifice of our lives to God's purpose. *Rom 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Rom 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Rom 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Rom 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Rom 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. Rom 6:8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

There is a general plan that is personal development under the Holy Spirit and specific plans for us as individuals. It is sad to see that so many Christians have little idea of personal goals under God. We have careers, families, homes and recreation but little understanding of how this fits in with the greater purpose of advancing the Kingdom. Why?

Perhaps it is because we spend very little time examining our gifts or seeking the Lord for a purpose. I believe that every saint can find a purpose and can be quite confident in his calling within the church. It may take time and effort to find it but it can be found. If we take time to develop earthly careers surely we should expend effort in developing our Christian role?

The old man is dead but like the grave clothes of Lazarus, he clings to us. *Rom 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* He is

to be put off and in his place the new clothes of the new life. *Eph 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

These new clothes reflect the light of God by showing all that is decent and kind in our lives. It is easier said than done but if we do it, we shall find that our relationships with God and each other endure because the flesh will have no part to play.

Paul tells us that all the things that we hate in others (and are present but forgiven in ourselves) must be disposed of, *Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.* I am so often convicted of my own hypocrisy because I want the children in the Sunday School to be the paragons of virtue that I fail so miserably to attain to.

I can say that I have finally, after 25 years in the faith (1996) come to a position where the most important and all consuming desire of my life is to see Christ glorified. It took so long because of the depth of residual sin in my life, not that I am claiming perfection, far from it. I do though appreciate the depth of the struggle and while some may change overnight, I can be patient with those wrestling in the faith. As Christians we all have a love for Christ that cannot be denied, but the level of commitment in response to His love often falls far short of what it should be. Abraham is an example of what happens when you are committed to God's purpose and it is an encouragement to see just how great the rewards are. We shall see just how worthwhile it was, soon in glory.

### **A Tale of Two Wells.**

In Genesis chapter 21 we find the tale of two wells and water that we take for granted. Water is the source of life and it is one of God's created wonders that teach us a lot about the Holy Spirit. *Gen 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. Joh 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* It is a unique fluid with physical properties unlike most others and these properties that are essential to life on earth.

Heat generally causes materials to expand removal causes contraction. Heat produces an increase in the amplitude of the movement of molecules, and consequently they require more space, therefore substances expand. Water is an exception at one point in its thermal cycle. Water at freezing point contracts when heated up to 4C, after this it expands normally. Conversely when water is cooled below 4C it expands until freezing point, when there is a sudden rapid expansion. This is why freezing bursts pipes by the water expanding..

Ice crystals require more space than water and being less dense ice floats, a cubic metre of ice weighs much less than a cubic metre of water. This phenomenon protects aquatic life because it forms a frozen insulating layer (if it sank water would freeze from the bottom up until everything was solid). Underneath the ice the temperature rarely falls below 4C. The law that governs the crystallisation of water that is, governing the arrangement of the molecules is such that it increases

the bulk of the fluid. There would also be severe climatic consequences if this were not so, such that life on Earth would cease.

We humans are made up mostly of water. Water makes up about 60% of adult body weight (43 liters/76 pints). Blood contains around 6 pints (3.5l), the bulk of the water being in the body cells (interstitial fluid). You tend to lose daily a pint (0.5l) through respiration, 3 pints (1.5l) as urine and 1 pint from the surface of the skin. You would live only for a matter of days without food and water. You could live for weeks or even months without food! Water is a vital fluid.

The best that Abraham could give to Hagar was a bottle of water and that was soon spent. *Gen 21:14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.* It was only God, appearing as the angel of God (theophany) who could supply her need in a wilderness. *Gen 21:19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.* It was there but she could only see it when He opened her eyes. If there is another allegory here, it is that the children of the law (Hagar) cannot survive of themselves. Even under the first covenant the Spirit was necessary to those chosen to life.

Abraham's well is a subject of dispute with the Philistine king, whose servants have attempted to steal it. *Gen 21:25 And Abraham reproveth Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.* There are many conflicts with the Philistines in the Old Testament, perhaps one of the most famous being between Goliath and David. The Philistines are enemies of God's people who mock His servants. In his third (yes there is one missing) letter to the Corinthians Paul warns against those who would steal the very faith that he had engendered, from under their very noses. *2Co 11:7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? 2Co 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. 2Co 11:9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.*

These latter day Philistines (super Apostles) were teaching another Christ, and they were welcomed by the Corinthians. If satan appears as an angel, Paul argues, then it is no surprise that his servants appear as ministers of righteousness. *2Co 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

The devil like the Philistines, will try to give us dry lives and make our world into a desert. It is only Christ who can take away spiritual drought! If your life is dry and your Christianity is wilting, then it is almost certain that your source is being tampered with. This may arise through personal neglect or through satanic attack but it does not have to be that way.

In the wilderness of Sinai, Christ provided water for the Israelis who drank from His rock. *1Co*



10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. At Jacob's well the Samaritan woman was offered a taste of 'the living water', by the same Christ, which is a source of eternal life. *Joh 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. Joh 4:11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Joh 4:12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Joh 4:13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: Joh 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* It comes from within the individual. If you believe in Jesus, this water will break out of your life. *Joh 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

For many, religion is an exercise with externals, manipulated by other people. The cross and its effect are externalised. As someone has observed, it is not the cross in your theology, it is the cross in your life that counts! Never become totally reliant on teachers and ministers to provide your spiritual life, draw from Jesus. Peter speaks of people who are wells without water and their prospect is bleak. *2Pe 2:17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*

For the believer the prospect is one of eternal health drawn from the river of water of life. This I take to be a person not a geographic feature of the everlasting kingdom. *Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

### Fathers and sons

As I read this passage in Genesis chapter 22 I was led to consider the character of some of the other fathers of the Older Testament when they were faced with adversity. Not that they were perfect in every respect in their lives yet in one thing they appear consistent and that is their attitude to God. They had an overwhelming sense of His power and His righteousness. Before we look at Abraham, let us consider another man, the high priest Aaron.

In Leviticus chapter 10, we have the tragedy of Aaron and his sons. The sons were part of the governing body of Israel and privy to the dealings of God yet they overstepped the mark when they went against Gods law in the offering of incense. *Exo 24:1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.* It would appear that they had been drinking before they offered what is called "strange fire" and

although drinking in moderation is never condemned, there is the warning that it can put men in impossible situations where their judgement is compromised and sin is the outcome. *Lev 10:9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.*

Incense was made to a special formulation and it had to be offered in a peculiar way. *Exo 30:34 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: Exo 30:35 And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: Exo 30:36 And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. Exo 30:37 And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Exo 30:38 Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people. Lev 16:12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail:*

The fire had to be taken from the altar of the burnt offering. A bonfire or domestic fire was not appropriate, it was common and unholy. This teaches us that prayer, for that is what incense symbolises must proceed from the base of sacrifice. Prayers offered independently of Christ are prayers not in His Name!

The strange fire came from some other source than sacrifice and it cost the boys their lives. Aaron does not reproach the Lord for this but reflects upon his own state. He cannot in all conscience partake in the sacrifice because of his grief and this brings a rebuke upon him. *Lev 10:19 And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and if I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD? Lev 10:16 And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron which were left alive, saying, His motives however are pure and he examines himself before the Lord. "Should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" He clearly sees the rights and wrongs and there he must let the matter rest however painful it is. God is always right.*

Abraham is another man who trusts God and became as a result a friend of God. *Jas 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.* Hebrews is a commentary on his attitude to God as result of the request to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering. *Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned*

*in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

Abraham may have reasoned from a number of positions that this was not acceptable, because for example, a sinful human could never be a holy sacrifice (only Christ could do this). Abraham would have been aware of the concepts of 'clean' and 'unclean' which date from at least the time of Noah. *Gen 7:2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Gen 7:3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.*

Abraham also seems to anticipate God's alternative providence of a 'kid', the same word used in Exodus for the Passover lamb. *Gen 22:8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. Exo 12:3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:*

However it may be that this was a simple response to Isaac's question and that the boy is oblivious to the undertaking of his father. If Abraham did reason in this fashion he was just humouring God and it devalues the whole concept of a trial of faith. The scripture would lead us to believe that this was not the case and that Abraham was prepared to trust God implicitly, and that he really was prepared to kill Isaac. The reason is that he reckoned God could resurrect him. *Heb 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.* God had promised Abraham 'seed' (Gen 15) and that this 'seed' would come from Isaac, the son of the promise. If Isaac became a sacrifice, then he must have to be raised from the dead in order that God should fulfil His word.

This is a wonderful concept, because it shows us that with God, even the most desperate circumstances to us are easily overturned by the power of God. In addition, and despite what we think, God never pushes the Christian beyond what he can bear. *1Co 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

There is also another aspect of this story and that is how closely it portrays the redemptive work of Christ. Thousands of years later on the same mountain (see **Blessings that count** in this series) Christ was to become the sacrifice for the sins of the world. *2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.*

We may say then, that the story of Abraham is typical of the work of God in Christ (typology). The similarities are:

- The Father offering His son ("thine only son").
- The Offering for sin, the burnt offering .
- The location at Moriah.
- The resurrection is implied in one and a reality in the other.
- The 3rd day is common. *Gen 22:4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.*
- Both involve the 'seed'.
- It was an example of justification by faith.

God was no debtor to Abraham for this act of obedience. *Gen 22:16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:*

There were rich blessings to come for the man who was prepared to yield back to God what God had loaned to him.

### Planet Earth...Transit Camp.

There is a saying in the world that you cannot buy happiness and in the case of Abraham, if it was 'buyable' then by the standard of his day he could afford it. Yet the very thing that he yearned for was beyond his reach in human terms and only his God could supply it. The son and heir. Without this son, there would be no Jesus, no salvation and no glory.

The scripture records that, "he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" and this explains why he never built a permanent home, but chose to camp for the whole of his life. He was looking forward to living with God. *Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

The land of promise was not an end in itself. It remained a strange country and perhaps he chose to remind himself of this by living in tents. We may well ask ourselves if this is true for us and if so, is there something that we could have that would be a constant reminder of our goal? We have the Lord's Table as a general reminder of our fellowship with the saints but perhaps we should as individuals have some personal token that reminds us daily that whether we live or die it is to the Lord and that our lives are focused on the great day when we shall join Christ and the great multitude of saints in heaven. *Rom 14:8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

### What could we choose?

It seems strange that the only permanent residence that Abraham purchases is the piece of land where he buries his beloved wife. *Gen 23:4 I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. Gen 23:5 And the*

*children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Gen 23:6 Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.*

It is as if he is making a statement about life. The only sure thing about it all is death, it is the one great fact of life.

To many people graves are morbid places which remind us of the past, but to the Christian, they are monuments to the future. The Old Testament talks about the kings who fell asleep and were buried with their fathers. *2Ki 14:16 And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead. 2Ki 14:20 And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.*

This was a reminder that death did not sever the bonds of family, yet for the wicked kings, they were not interred in the same manner. If you examine the genealogy of Jesus you will find that some kings are deliberately omitted. Why do you think this is?

Abraham joins Sarah in this cave Machpelah as did Isaac and Rebekah with Jacob. *Gen 25:9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; Gen 49:31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. Gen 50:13 For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.*

It became the family tomb in Canaan, a symbol of the rest together in the land of promise. It was Abraham's only possession. *Gen 23:20 And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.*

Abraham was concerned that his son Isaac found a suitable wife and he puts the task in the hands of his faithful servant. *Gen 24:2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:* By the way, Isaac is not a young man when this happens. In our day and age it seems an intrusion on individual freedom to impose such an important choice upon our offspring. Yet is it such a bad thing?

It raises the whole issue of parental guidance. At what stage should a parent relinquish control over his children? We spend years and years guiding, directing and disciplining, yet in this vital area parents leave the whole thing to chance. Why? If our judgement is good enough in other areas of upbringing, why should we back out here? After all we know a lot more about relationships and marriage than our children!

I think that what we have here is a very close family. The servant is a trusted man who has the mind of his aging master. The whole thing is built around mutual trust and understanding. Isaac trusts his dad and the dad trusts his servant. They want the best for each other.

It is also built upon the biblical concept of 'the equal yoke'. *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

Sometimes, the judgement of young people is often clouded so that the real issues are lost sight of. "Romance" replaces judgement and the consequence in our loose society is that 50% of marriages will fail!

Marriage is the breakpoint with parents and so it is vital if we are to discharge our duties to our children that we make the break as secure as possible. *Mar 10:7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; After all, who wants them back?*

I think that this is an area that is neglected by Christian parents and that it is one that will cause them the most grief. It is one that we can approach in good time and one that can give us immense pleasure in the outcome.

### **The Components of Marriage....1**

We spoke last time of the concern of Abraham to find a suitable wife for his son. We should also have a similar concern among ourselves that our children and all single persons in the Church should find a spouse and enter a marriage that will honour and glorify God. To that end I want to digress to consider in some detail the components of marriage, in particular the attributes and roles that we should encourage in men and woman (single and married). You will no doubt be aware that this week (24/Aug/1995) that there was a mass wedding ceremony for thousands of followers of the cult leader Sung Yong Moon (Moonies). The pairings are made from examining pictures of the individuals and by this process they claim to have a divorce rate of a few per cent. Why?

The Christian has a peculiar union with Christ and men and women are encouraged into marriage ('for this cause') to be joined in a relationship that supersedes the parental relationship. *Eph 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: Eph 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Eph 5:33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.* That relationship is one in which the man adopts the role of Christ and the woman adopts the role of the church. *Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

The husband is by this example given the position of headship and the wife is encouraged to support this role. *Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body*

The relationship must be based on mutual consent and willingness to adopt the duties appropriate to the roles. In Revelation, Christ is locked out of the relationship but does not threaten or use force to gain the position that is rightfully His. *Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

This may seem a rather 'laid back' attitude, but scripture does indicate that where people are not committed to a relationship, force and legality is not applied to hold the fabric together. *1Co 7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*

Marriage is therefore a mutual society working towards common goals that are achieved by the qualities associated with the roles of the individual. In order to honour God wives must show subjection to the husband and in the **context** of the passage this has particular reference to his efforts to sanctify her (we shall DV in due course examine the bounds of obedience but for the moment I will suggest that it is qualified obedience). She should not fight his godly intentions. The husband is to love the wife in a self-sacrificing manner. Not however by granting every fancy of the flesh but by the spiritual application of truth ('washing of water **by the word**') in sanctifying her. What elevates Christian marriage above the relationships of unbelievers is the central core of common spiritual activity.

Churches fail to impress these roles upon its young people and as a consequence they are ill prepared when they are thrown together in marriage. The woman will not seek out a godly, strong man who will love and care for her eternal soul and spiritual well being. The man likewise will not be aware of the qualities of godly woman who will **let him** perfect her soul.

Christian men must develop some ability with the word of God and its practical application if they are ever to function as a godly husband and best serve their wives, sanctifying them **by the word**. They are also to be taught that men take responsibility before God for the woman's actions. This is seen clearly in Genesis where God seeks out Adam not Eve, and rebukes him for following not leading. *Gen 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? Gen 3:17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

When Moses fails to exercise his duty of circumcising his son, God was going to kill him, not his wife but his wife saves him. *Exo 4:24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Exo 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. Exo 4:26 So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.*

Circumcision was the responsibility of the leader of the house. It was Moses' duty to initiate the action however it was not wrong for his wife to act!

Headship is delegated by God primarily to men who are known and gifted but this does not preclude women from positions of responsibility. *Deu 1:15 So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.*

The circumstances surrounding the instances where women become principle leaders may be because the men are failing in their duties. *Jdg 4:4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. Jdg 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.*

There are clear roles for men and women in various spheres such as the biological, spiritual and temporal. Preparation for these roles is the responsibility of the parent or guardian who will teach them also to recognise the voice of God. *Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 2Ti 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also 2Ti 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; 2Ti 1:14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. 1Sa 3:8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. 1Sa 3:9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

There is plenty of biblical evidence to suggest that where people fail in later life, then it reflects back upon their training and upbringing part of which is discipline. This discipline must have reference to God and is not to be used as a means of venting parental frustration. *Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. Pro 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Pro 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Pro 29:21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length. Ecc 4:13 Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.*

Discipline is one of the highest expressions of parental love although not pleasant at the time, it yields righteousness (right wisdom) in season. *Heb 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Heb 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Heb 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Heb 12:11 Now no chastening for the*



*present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

So then, what plans should parents have for their children? What goals have they set? What direction will they steer towards? What programme is in place to teach responsibility? What disciplinary measures will they develop? What plans do they have to develop a person fit to marry?

### Qualities of a Spouse

What you most desire.....

QUALITY/ATTRIBUTE	REASON?

### The Components of Marriage....2

We discussed last time, the qualities that we would like to see in a partner. We also discussed some of the desirable and undesirable characteristics in women as described in the book of Proverbs. I would like us to look a little more closely at the attributes that Abraham's servant brings out in the choice of Isaac's wife.

I do not believe that the servant framed his request at the last minute, but from the moment that Abraham set the task . *Gen 24:8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.* Of course it was essential that the woman was a willing party, even a planned marriage is not a forced marriage and Abraham realised that. Also, the yoke had to be culturally and religiously equal - the LORD, Jehovah, the covenant God is acknowledged - the Canaanites were a bad lot. *Gen 24:3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: Gen 24:31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.*

It is also a lesson to us that marriage is not to be entered into lightly and again I reiterate the need for parents and single people to continually bear in mind the qualities of a godly partner and accept nothing less than that laid down by God. Abraham did, and it worried Abraham enough to act!

The servant arrives at the city of Nahor in the evening after what must have been an epic journey of many hundreds of miles. *Gen 24:10 And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. Gen 24:11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.* The good servant doesn't settle in and then pursue his task after he is rested, he serves his master's interest first. *Luk 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? Luk 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Luk 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* Likewise the young woman Rebekah had not finished her labours.

What qualities do we discern in this encounter? She was a willing worker, prepared to work hard and late. *Gen 24:11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.* She was prepared to go the extra mile which would certainly have been the case with thirsty camels, and must have been strong. She kept herself pure as a virgin and so was a faithful woman waiting for a single husband. *Gen 24:16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.* She was charitable prepared to serve and confident to communicate with a stranger. *Gen 24:18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.* She was not a shy retiring violet but a self possessed, confident individual.

The servant does not go for the popular characteristics of 'Cosmo' magazine. A leggy Bimbo, oversexed, good looking, rich, fun and who likes partying and dancing. He is looking for a wife not an affair for Isaac.

The characteristics of a good woman are enduring as we see in the description in Proverbs chapter 31 and they compare with those found in Rebekah. She too is a worker, charitable, she is kind, she is strong but dignified, she too works evenings, she is a provider for her household, thus a homemaker not just a consumer of others labours. *Pro 31:15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. Pro 31:20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. Pro 31:12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life Pro 31:17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. Pro 31:25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. Pro 31:18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.*

Abigail another great lady of the Old Testament is also a forthright, discerning, understanding, honest, honourable and charitable person. *1Sa 25:32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 1Sa 25:33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. 1Sa 25:34 For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. 1Sa 25:35 So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.* Though why she married Nabal in the first place remains a mystery.

With all of those qualities, we might be tempted to consider that independence is the great virtue in a woman but we would be wrong. The Bible indicates that a woman must be prepared to obey her husband. *1Pe 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 1Pe 3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 1Pe 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;* Today the words of the marriage service often leave out the words "love honour and obey", particularly the "obey". How though would you test this willingness in a prospective partner?

Again the world's influence today has a heavy emphasis on being fashionable and trendy, something which the Apostle warns against at the expense of the inner beauty of godliness. It is often too late to expect this to suddenly appear in a mature woman but it is something that can be instilled in the young. Again training the young is important.

Schooling centres around teaching knowledge, sciences and arts, with very little attention on morality and fitting children to become responsible adults. The lack of discipline today will mature into disorderly adults. Parents should be on guard against being swept along with the humanist tide.

It is not the primary responsibility of the church leaders to act as surrogate parents. Parents must bring their own children up in the "fear and admonition of the Lord". They must have an agenda worked out and a plan to lead their offspring in a godly manner.

I was brought up in a home where sex was something that was not easily discussed. I had no guidance in choosing a partner, and was left to play life's lottery on my own. It doesn't have to be that way. I believe that a lot of the problems occur in life because the parents are poor role models. Responsible parenting is a duty and Abraham shows himself to be in that class.

### **The Components of Marriage....3**

What may strike us as unusual in this day and age that a stranger can come along and take a young woman away with him so easily. However, The LORD was behind the whole affair and the final decision was Rebekah's. *Gen 24:50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth*

*from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Gen 24:58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.*

Here is a verse to evangelise with, **"wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go"**. Here is faith in the servant and the only begotten son of the master. Every Christian makes the same decision and it is one that should not be delayed over. Will you go with Christ?

She does not go alone however but leaves with her nurse (Heb:'one who suckles'). As Rebekah draws near we find that Isaac went out into the field in the early evening to meditate. The word is also used for 'commune' with ones soul, 'talking' of God's wonderful works and 'meditating' upon God's statutes. *Psa 77:6 I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Psa 105:2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Psa 119:23 Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*

This tells us a lot about Isaac and his personal faith because he made time for his God in the bustle of life, and it is an example for us to follow.

No matter how busy the Christian is, no matter what his worldly commitments, he has an overriding duty to God and that on a daily basis. It is perhaps this single feature of the Christian life that distinguishes him from the 'once a week' church goer. Some Christians set aside a regular period for a 'quiet time' and this helps them to order their faith. Others make time on an ad hoc basis but whatever strategy we might employ (and there are no specific rules), it is important to develop our communication with God beyond prayer. This will involve study if we are to have anything to meditate about!

Is there such a thing as love at first sight? It would seem so as Isaac is the man that Rebekah sets her eyes upon. *Gen 24:65 For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.* It might imply that relationships can be built on appearance, but we must not forget that God is orchestrating this whole business. There is no reason to doubt that other marriages made in heaven will enjoy the same privilege.

Rebekah does something unusual when she sees her man. She takes a veil. Modernists interpret the injunction in Corinthians that a woman praying covers her hair as a cultural peculiarity of the Greeks. *1Co 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 1Co 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. 1Co 11:4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 1Co 11:5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 1Co 11:6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. 1Co 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 1Co*

*11:8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.*

Paul though derives his authority from God's order in creation and the passage before us shows that the practice of coverings was in practice in early times. Rebekah's action is one that shows us her attitude to her husband as head of the family right from the start. She is acknowledging his headship.

We might have expected that as God's plan had come so wonderfully to pass, that it might culminate in some wonderful ceremony. Yet throughout scripture, we find no such thing as a religious ceremony to consecrate a marriage. I am not saying that it would be wrong to have such a service, but it is never required of anybody. We do find that marriages are celebrated with a feast (for example at Cana of Galilee) but never with a religious service. *Joh 2:1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: Joh 2:2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*

This is a subject that I find intriguing and one that I return to often while each time trying to gain further insight into God's mind. In our modern society the act of marriage is viewed as binding from the time of the actual ceremony or as viewed from the Catholic perspective from the moment of consummation in the sexual act. It is true that the act of intercourse in certain circumstances made marriage inevitable but not always. *Deu 22:28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Deu 22:29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. Deu 22:22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. Deu 22:23 If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Deu 22:24 Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. Deu 22:25 But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: Deu 22:26 But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter:*

There is something that occurs in the biblical process (we call it engagement) called betrothal or to use the quaint word of the Authorised Version espousal. Joseph was espoused to Mary and this was a high level commitment equivalent to being in an unconsummated marriage and holding all the legal requirements of marriage. *Mat 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.* While it is normal to have friendships with the opposite sex Christians are never encouraged to 'play the field' or enter into trial relationships and sex before marriage is fornication.

It would seem that people made the commitment to each other at a stage that preceded cohabitation. This is something personal to the man and the woman because they have to make a

life together. The marriage feast marks the completion of the relationship. *Rev 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

The parallel of the relationship that we have as Christians with Christ is obvious. While we have not yet arrived at the final consummation we have made a commitment and are clearly united. We are in effect engaged to Christ. *2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

The Greek word for engaged or espoused (AV) is the root of the word **harmony** meaning the joining together of parts. Marriage should be a harmonious relationship in the truest sense of the word and that means the parties working to build the relationship. As we all know a marriage has no guarantee of lasting because the parties have gone through a ceremony.

### After the honeymoon...

Before we consider Isaac's marriage in a little more detail let us get some idea of the chronology of his lifetime. He was nearing middle age when he married Rebekah, being 40 years old. *Gen 25:20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.* Since he died aged 180 years this was not necessarily old in his time since many of the patriarchs were nearing 50 years when they became fathers (see earlier notes on chronology). *Gen 35:28 And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years.* Isaac was in fact 60 years old when he became dad. *Gen 25:26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.*

Since Abraham died age 175 years old when Isaac was 75 years and Ishmael was 89 years (14 years older than Isaac) the twin sons would be 15 years old. *Gen 25:7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.* *Gen 16:16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.*

Abraham would have seen his grandsons. Ishmael died age 137 years and Isaac died age 180 years. *Gen 25:17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.* The sons of Abraham unite to bury their father. *Gen 25:9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;*

The marriage is childless marriage for 20 years. We may only guess what pressure this had on the marriage but if other examples of the Old Testament serve as an illustration it must have been a great burden. I believe that Isaac made it a matter of prayer. A prayer that continued for 20 years? *Gen 25:21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.* Effectual, fervent prayer does however work. *Jas 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The*

*effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Why though did the Lord do this to so many women in withholding children? Rebekah is not alone in the Old Testament, for example; Sarah, Rachel, Manoah's wife and Hannah. *Gen 11:30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child. Gen 29:31 And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. Jdg 13:2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. 1Sa 1:5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.*

Here are the first recorded twins of scripture who by their lives become a parable of God's elective grace. *Rom 9:10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; Rom 9:11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) Rom 9:12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Rom 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* God's purpose towards Jacob was written in eternity but we may ask if the outcome could have been achieved with less duplicity on the part of the actors? Events as they occur show us the weakness of the flesh and if we may learn the lessons here we may be spared some of the heartaches of parenthood.

The long awaited children highlight a rift in the relationship of Isaac and Rebekah, who started so well as a model for the church but now have divided loyalty. Favouritism is divisive and that is what we now see. Children should be a cause of unity and common purpose and should be dealt with equally and without favour. *Psa 127:3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.* What had occurred in the marriage to precipitate this event?

The scripture says that Jacob was loved by his mother being a homely man (lit: quiet man). Isaac loved Esau, the firstborn but not God's choice. He was a rugged individual, a man of the field who pandered to his father's love of meat. Not that the traits in either son are necessarily to be condemned but they are not enjoyed equally by the parents. What does it say of the marriage and the purpose that the parents had for their sons?

I believe that Isaac became self indulgent and an indulgent parent. I believe that he was prepared to overlook the faults in Esau and that he did not correct him. It is easy to do. I have seen many Christian parents who are blind to their children's faults and that they can do no wrong. This is certainly not Christian love but it is certainly tough. *Pro 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* Parents often fear that they will lose the affection of their children if they dare to discipline but God's way always wins. Why? The battle is with original sin and there can be no compromise with sin.

Am I right in my assumptions? Look at what happens and what the scriptures record. Esau was a profane person and he despised the promises of God. *Heb 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* His father must have been a party to this declension. What input had Isaac made in the boys lives? He was also willing to be

deceived by the outward . *Gen 27:21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. Gen 27:22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Gen 27:23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. Gen 27:24 And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am.*

His own wife is a party in the plot hardly a united couple. *Gen 27:6 And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Gen 27:7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Gen 27:8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Gen 27:9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: Gen 27:10 And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.* She deceives her blind husband and is hardly a helpmeet to Isaac and we may well ask where is their love now? It seems to have grown cold.

Indulgent parents can bring their children down and in this case they sowed seeds that were to bring much unhappiness in the lives of the siblings. Esau was so incensed by his brothers cheating that he would have murdered him and Jacob lived in fear of Esau. *Gen 27:41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. Gen 32:11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.*

Had the parents known the outcome of their attitudes would they have behaved in the underhand way that they did?

The lessons then are that we should communicate with each other as parents about our feelings for our children. We should identify the qualities that we admire in our children but also we should determine if those qualities are godly and the aspirations righteous. We should guide the children and not be guided by them.

We should develop our love for each other as husband and wife as parents and use this unity as a strength to guide our offspring. Parents should be 'laying up' for the children not just the things of this life, but that which leads to eternal life. *2Co 12:14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.* Also we should teach them to respect the promises of God.

## Isaac

What sort of man then was Isaac? He lived in the shadow of the great patriarch Abraham the commander and was I think greatly influenced by his mother with whom he appeared to be extremely close. *Gen 18:18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and*



*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? Gen 24:67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

Not that a woman's influence is wrong, but it may lead to a soft character which is the case with Isaac. Isaac lacks passion. While other men might seek out wife his father does it for him and this may reflect that Isaac was not an outgoing character. Indeed he was not an adventurous man and there is no record that he ever left the borders of Canaan (the Promised Land) in all of his life.

His parents were also very old when he was born and perhaps on this account, Isaac lacked a lively and playful childhood, not that means it lacked love for they loved him dearly. Very old parents sometimes develop old children. It does not appear that they were tolerant of child's play, for we read that his parents didn't take kindly to Ishmael joking with him. *Gen 21:9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.*

He was along with his family a tent dweller and as we know, the significance of a tent is that it has no foundation, no permanence. *Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:* The reason was because they had an interest in a better kingdom and a better builder but this hope alone did not guarantee that they would have no flaws or human weakness'.

Gifts do not make graces. Christians often become complacent, even arrogant when God's blessings abound, rather than being cautiously humble. Isaac was blessed despite his failures which we note were not on his account but according to the promise to his father Abraham (and therefore rested in the Seed - Christ). *Gen 26:24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

We may of course appreciate that there is a lot of typology in the nature of these events, whereby certain aspects of Christ and the church are prefigured but we are dealing with real people and these are responsible for their actions.

We noted that there was favouritism with the sons Jacob and Esau which suggested that the marriage although loving was not totally open. This may be because Rebekah was a strong character and she had her own agenda for Jacob which she puts into motion by deceit. Although she was a good woman she had come from a family where deceit was an accepted practice. This becomes clear when Jacob goes to work for his mother's brother Laban. Had Rebekah's brother been an influence on her development, a role model which she unwittingly followed? If Isaac had been a stronger man taking the lead then his wife may not have taken the path she did.

Unfortunately, there are many Isaac's and Rebekah's in the churches today. Weak men, strong woman. I have seen many such relationships and without exception I have seen problems in the

upbringing of the children which rather than unite the couples have highlighted the differences and weakened the relationship. I do not mean by this, that all such marriages lack love or are unhappy. We find Isaac 'sporting' with his wife and whatever they were doing it was enough to show Abimelech that they were married. *Gen 26:8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.*

While Abraham was at pains to avoid his son marrying a Canaanite Isaac does not apply the same resolve with regard to Esau, who in his own headstrong fashion married a Hittite. *Gen 24:3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: Gen 26:34 And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:* This event did not break up the relationship or diminish Isaac's infatuation with 'meat' or his desire to continue to bless his wayward son and give him the birthright. *Gen 27:4 And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.* Isaac was blind in more ways than one, for he was blind to this sin.

Samson's parents were just the same. Samson was an appropriate name for it means 'sunshine' and for his parents it shone out of every orifice. *Jdg 14:1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. Jdg 14:2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Jdg 14:3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. Jdg 14:4 But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.*

While we see behind this scene the hand of the Lord against the Philistines, it was not known to the parents so this did not influence their behaviour and they did not make a very strong protest.

The sorrows that must have fallen upon Samson's parents were certainly present with Isaac and Rebekah. *Gen 26:35 Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.* If only parents could taste this 'grief of mind' beforehand it might strengthen their resolve to stand upon the Word of God. 'A little folding of the hands' says the proverb and one becomes poverty stricken. *Pro 6:9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Pro 6:10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: Pro 6:11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man*

Letting things pass by default will certainly cause problems! Parents beware of the Philistines. *Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.*

God has given us a way that we spurn at our peril.

Not however content with one wife Esau takes two Judith and Bashemath who no doubt brought their culture and gods with them. *Gen 26:34 And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:*

We may guess what mischief they got up to, for they were a source of annoyance to Rebekah to the point where she would have given up on life itself, driven to despair. *Gen 27:46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?*

Yet it is hard to feel sorrow for the parents who neglected to instruct their children and who justly reap what they have sown but it has the effect of galvanising the parents into action. *Gen 28:1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Gen 28:2 Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. Gen 28:3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; Gen 28:4 And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. Gen 28:5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.* How sad that they had to learn by experience rather than by faith!

Esau too finally gets the message seeing that the Hittites did not please his father and takes wives of his father's offspring while Jacob seeks wives through his mothers offspring. *Gen 28:6 When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padanaram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; Gen 28:9 Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.*

I cannot but feel some sorrow for Esau, who although personally responsible to God for his behaviour as indeed we all are, suffered as a consequence of his father's neglect.

And at this point Isaac disappears from history until his burial is recorded. *Gen 35:27 And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. Gen 35:28 And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. Gen 35:29 And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*

One writer (J G Bellett) has suggested that Isaac rusted out as a vessel no longer fit for the Masters service. Unlike for example, Moses and David who died in harness, Isaac fades away. We should reflect on this. If we are personally in danger of cooling down rather than melting down, then the cause will be found in our neglect of the faith and the principles that accompany it. Principles I suggest that we should hold practically and experimentally, not simply theoretically.

I know man, a professing Christian who has two sons, whose wife sprung to defend one of her boys when I was speaking to him of Christ's forgiveness because it was clearly having an effect. It upset her to see her boy upset! The marriage is divided in fact I think they have separate beds. The husband is a Calvinist and would always stress the Sovereignty of God and predestination in the life of man and quite rightly so. Yet the very goal of predestination was sadly lacking in his life, the conformity to the image of Christ. *Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* (**Note at 2020.** Their marriage ended a few years ago in divorce. A sad reflection on what happens if one is not agreed on the scripture. *Amo 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*)

May God be gracious to convince us of His ways as the only way and spare us all from becoming just theoretical Christians.

### Blind Faith

Chapter 27 of Genesis is the sorry tale of deceit that we have discussed in previous studies, yet in the providence of God **working together for good**. *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

The New Testament makes a number of observations on these events.

- *Heb 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*
- *Heb 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*

There are a number of questions that these verses raise. If Isaac was blind and deceived how could it be described as faith? He did not know who was before him. *Gen 27:23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.*

If Esau was a profane person, why was he blessed? What were the blessings? To Jacob it foretold the blessing upon Israel and to Esau it foretold his deliverance from Jacob. *Gen 27:27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: Gen 27:28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Gen 27:29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. Gen 27:30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Gen 27:31 And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. Gen 27:32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. Gen 27:33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea,*

*and he shall be blessed. Gen 27:34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. Gen 27:35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. Gen 27:36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? Gen 27:37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? Gen 27:38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. Gen 27:39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; Gen 27:40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.*

The blessing was clearly prophetic and as we know prophecy is not generated by the will of man but by God. *2Pe 1:20 Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.* In this respect we can say that God was behind the utterance but did Isaac fully understand what was happening?

Was Isaac aware of the words of God to his wife about the two nations and the elder serving the younger? *Gen 25:22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. Gen 25:23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.* If so his own flesh was leading him contrary to the expressed purpose of God. Perhaps Rebekah had kept this to herself which if so, is a sad reflection of their communication and goes some way to explaining Isaac's actions. Yet he is nonetheless acting in faith. Is this conscious or unconscious faith? Is there such a thing?

The scriptures reveal that man cannot but utter the words that God puts in his mouth. *Num 23:12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?* The words do not necessarily pass through the mouth of a believer as is illustrated in the prophecy of the high priest. *Joh 11:50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

God addressed the people through the man who was opposed to His Son. The Spirit of God can totally change the personality of a man and Balaam described as an unrighteous man was turned to bless Israel. *1Sa 10:6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. 2Pe 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*

Clearly a man can be possessed by God to speak words that he does not understand or that he may not want to say.

Faith is in one sense the communication of the unseen giving hope. *Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb 11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report. Heb 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

In another sense faith is the response to this communication. Complete faith has knowledge and action resulting from that knowledge. *Jas 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Jas 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, Jas 2:16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Jas 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Jas 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

There are then degrees of faith. *Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Rom 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Mat 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

What I am suggesting by this is that Isaac was acting in faith because it was God working His purpose out through him. It was not necessary that Isaac was conscious of the objects before him in order to make his faith effective. In this respect it was **blind faith** but it was still faith.

Why then bless Esau when he was a profane man who despised the birthright? *Heb 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* To that we reply what was worthy in Jacob of a blessing? He deceived and lied about God, hardly a worthy cause. *Gen 27:20 And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.*

This shows us that blessings are not always caused by something that is worthy in us. Salvation is a prime example. The blessings are all part of God's purpose and design, which may be given for the benefit of future generations. They are part of God's purpose in Christ Jesus. Jacob's blessing was to come to fruition in the future nation. Esau or Edom was also to bless the future nation and enjoy some degree of preservation in the scourging of the Canaanites. *Gen 36:9 And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir: Deu 2:5 Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto*

*Esau for a possession.*

The lessons to be learned from this passage are then firstly, that we may sometimes be moved to speak in faith without fully understanding what we are doing and I think that this may occur where we are not fully in harmony with the purpose of God. Any prophetic utterances that we may make should be examined not for their content alone but to reveal our relationship to God. We should ask "why is God using me" and "what must I do to understand the mind of God?"

Secondly, that we should examine our own state before God when we receive a blessing. If we are not walking worthily we should face up to our failure and use this as an occasion to repent. Many Christians may take it that a blessing is God's seal and condoning of their behaviour which they know to be wrong.

From our own perspective we all think that we have a good working relationship with our God but the scriptures reveal without exception that mortal men are never totally in step with God. Our mortality makes us fallible and it is part of our fallen nature. We should not forget also that despite the blessing that Esau received he was not one of God's chosen ones. *Rom 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

### Jacob's Ladder

Jacob leaves his parent's home at the instigation of his mother and because of the threat upon his life by Esau. *Gen 27:41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. Gen 27:42 And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Gen 27:43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; Gen 27:44 And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; Gen 27:45 Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?* There is no evidence that he ever saw his mother Rebekah alive again. The relationship she had cultivated so long was broken by her own deceitfulness.

Jacob leaves Beersheba (later to be incorporated into Judah) and makes his way north through Canaan. *Gen 28:10 And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.*

Some days into his journey travelling light, he makes a night camp at a place called Luz and there has a memorable experience. During the night he has a dream in which he sees a ladder set up from earth and rising to heaven, upon which the angels go up and down. *Gen 28:12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.* From the top of the ladder he hears the voice of Jehovah who gives another blessing to Jacob. *Gen 28:13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I*

*give it, and to thy seed; Gen 28:14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Gen 28:15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

We gain another insight into Jacob's character where we see a man who cannot take God's word at its face value. God said that He would keep Jacob in all the places he would go, Jacob says **IF** God keeps me in the way I go then he will be my God. *Gen 28:21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:* This is hardly a man of faith, he is a cunning man but a man who is afraid. *Gen 28:17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.* The true believer would have fallen down in gratitude saying "thank you Lord for all your mercies". Not so Jacob. He is like many who think that they can bargain with God from a position of sin!

An article in "Every day with Jesus", asked the question, "who's the focal point?" It was a comment on the verse in 1 Corinthians (1 v 31) and it is appropriate to challenge ourselves here, in the light of Jacob's attitude. Surely we should be asking the Lord if we may go with Him rather than that He may be with us? We are in danger of appropriating Christ for our own purpose rather than seeking His purpose in our lives. Christianity becomes an appendage to our own indulgence.

The boy Samuel was an example of a servant listening to His master. *1Sa 3:9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Speak Lord for thy servant heareth!* We are in no position to bargain with God (as Jacob thought) but we are in a position to listen. We are also in a position to follow but it requires that all else is subservient to Christ. *Mat 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Mat 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.* This is a hard teaching that we should give heed to but it is at the core of our faith.

What of the ladder? The explanation is given to us in the New Testament in John's gospel. *Joh 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Joh 1:48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Joh 1:49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Joh 1:50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. Joh 1:51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*



It is of note that in the context, Nathaniel is called "an Israelite in whom there is no guile" unlike Jacob who as the Father of Israel was full of it. Nathaniel is amazed that Jesus could know him on so short an acquaintance and on this simple thing is convinced that Jesus is both the Son of God and King of Israel. Well says Jesus you think that was amazing, wait 'til you see the rest, angels ascending and descending on the Son of man. **Jesus is Jacob's ladder!**

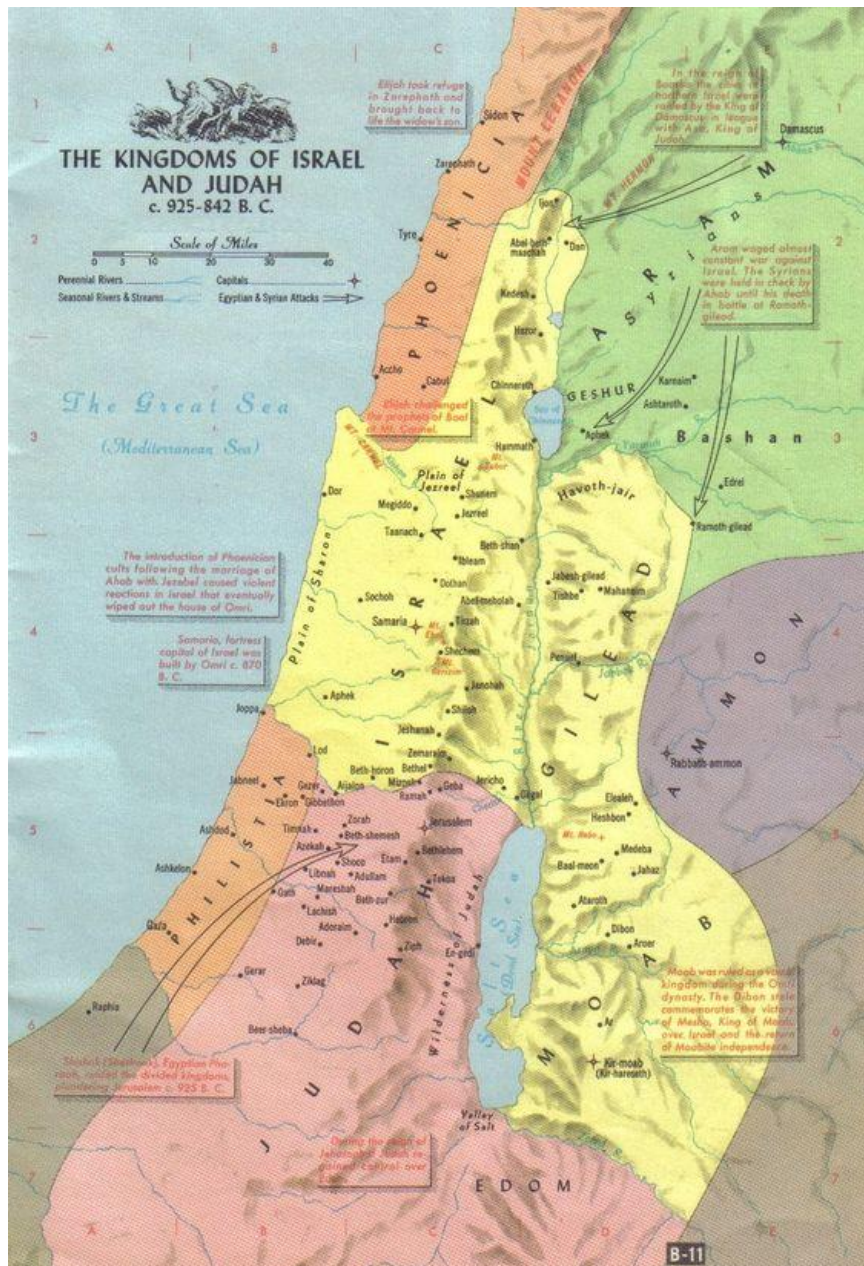
Jacob had been given a vision of Christ who is the true mediator between God and man and that work had been set up on Earth to bring man back to God. This is a central tenet of the Christian faith yet it has been undermined by many sects who always like to add to the word of God. The teaching of justification by works is fairly common. Among the teaching of the Roman Catholic church (by Bishop Alphonse Ligouri) is one that states that Mary is the saviour of sinners.

He illustrates his belief by describing a scene in which there are two ladders, with Christ at the head of one and Mary at the top of the other. The sinner on seeing the angry (sic!) face of Christ falls back defeated. On trying the other ladder he ascends easily and is brought into Christ's presence by Mary. The teaching is "what son would refuse the request of his mother?" Christ is viewed as a stern judge, Mary is more understanding. It reminds me of Larry Tomzak's boyhood concept of Jesus as a man who had eaten pickle juice that's why he has a picture in his den of a laughing Jesus! The catholic's have a teaching that she (Mary) "is truly a **mediatrix** of peace between sinners and God", which flies in the face of the bible. *1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

Jacob recognises the place of the dream as the gate of heaven, again a reference that we may relate to the person of Christ. *Gen 28:17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Joh 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

This further confirms the exclusiveness of Christ who in once sense is the means of access and also a barrier to the unworthy. It was also called the house of God (Bethel in the Hebrew). Jacob's recognition of God was reflected in his attitude towards God's providence in his life. He would give a tenth of his increase back to God. *Gen 28:22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

It is not said how this was to be collected or distributed. Where did it go?



## Bethel....House of God or Man?

Bethel figures many times in the history of Jacob and of Israel. Jacob returns again to build an altar to God, Deborah, Rebekah's nurse is buried there and Rachel died in childbirth on the way from Bethel. *Gen 35:3 And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. Gen 35:8 But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth. Gen 35:16 And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. Gen 35:17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. Gen 35:18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. Gen 35:19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.*

It was part of the region visited by the spies after the battle of Jericho. *Jos 7:2 And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.*

The first conflict was a defeat because of the sin of one man, Achan who out of greed sold his soul for a bar of gold and a coat. *Jos 7:21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.* The sin punished, the Israelites gain a victory. *Jos 8:12 And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. Jos 8:13 And when they had set the people, even all the host that was on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. Jos 8:14 And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city. Jos 8:15 And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. Jos 8:16 And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. Jos 8:17 And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel.*

It was from Bethel, that the famous woman Judge, Deborah, perhaps named in honour of Rebekah's nurse, exercised her authority. *Jdg 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.*

The time of the Judges is noted for the waxing and waning of the nation's relationship with God. They were often only as good as their leaders and at the time of Deborah you will find that there are few strong men.

Bethel became famous or should we say infamous, for the events that occurred after the death of King Solomon. Solomon had kindled God's anger because he had gone after other gods. *1Ki 11:9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 1Ki 11:10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 1Ki 11:11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.* You will note that Solomon's legendary wisdom was no protection against folly. He was indeed a sophomore, a wise fool.

The kingdom would be 'torn' on his account in the days of his son Rehoboam and Jeroboam, son of his servant. *1Ki 11:13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen. 1Ki 11:43 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead. 1Ki 11:26 And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king.*

Jeroboam was a brave man who Solomon elevated to ruler over the house of Joseph and received a prophecy concerning his future rule over Israel. *1Ki 11:28 And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. 1Ki 11:29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: 1Ki 11:30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: 1Ki 11:31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 1Ki 11:32 (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) 1Ki 11:33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. 1Ki 11:34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes:*

Solomon, perhaps to try and change the future, sets out to kill Jeroboam but he escapes into Egypt.

Rehoboam although the son of a wise man had no feeling for wisdom and he despised the old counsellors of his father in favour of his friends advice. *1Ki 12:8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him: 1Ki 12:9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? 1Ki 12:10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but*

*make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. 1Ki 12:11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*

The old counsellors pointed out that the duty of the king was to be as a servant a fact that Jesus taught. *1Ki 12:7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. Mat 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. Mat 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; Mat 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Mat 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

If Jesus became a servant then so should we. Rehoboam's harsh act set in motion the chain of events that would split the kingdom and start the rebellion. *1Ki 12:19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.*

The kingdom divided as the prophet Abijah had announced into the northern tribes (Israel) and the southern tribe of Judah (see map). *1Ki 11:30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: 1Ki 11:31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 1Ki 11:32 (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) 1Ki 11:33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. 1Ki 11:34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: 1Ki 11:35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. 1Ki 11:36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.* The word '**Jew**' is derived from Judah but is also applied to the whole nation, just as the term **Israel** is also applied to include the people of Judah.

Jeroboam realised that with the religious focus of the nation in Judah the secession could fail and Israel return to Judah, with him paying the penalty of his life. *1Ki 12:26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David.* To avoid this consequence, he set up two religious foci, one in the north of Israel in Dan and the other in the south at Bethel. *1Ki 12:29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.* Jeroboam had invented the State church, the Church of Israel and it has all the marks of state churches the world over.

Firstly it is not governed by the word of God. The word of God has no supremacy in matters of faith and practice. *2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for*

*reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:* God had appointed the place for His name (Jerusalem) and He had described the sacrifices in the books of the law. Jeroboam decrees otherwise and makes golden calves as the people in the wilderness did. They may not always be made of gold but they can serve the same purpose (can you think of any?).

Secondly, the people appointed to conduct the religion are made not by God but by ministers or rulers. The Puritans refused to accept the divine right of kings, rightly recognising that God is Lord of lords and King of kings. The ruler also appoints the administrators and priests of religion. *1Ki 12:31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.*

Bishops of the Church of England are appointed through the Prime Minister's office. It doesn't matter if the Prime minister is an atheist, he holds the power of the state.

God's appointees under the first covenant were the Levites this was their calling. State religion only requires that men comply with its dictates they do not need God's calling. The New Testament clearly shows that its leaders are both called and faithful to the word of God. *Tit 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

It is a sad reflection upon human nature that people will willingly submit themselves to falsehood and follow the teachings of men often without taking any trouble to prove what is truth. *1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

It is an individual's responsibility to seek God and find the truth. Some time ago the home secretary banned a visit by the cult leader Sung Yon Moon. To many Christians this may seem like a good thing but only a weak church needs to shelter under the protection of the state. If cults flourish the church is not doing its work and it should cry out to heaven for prophets like Elijah to stand against the prophets of Baal not the servants of the state.

Bethel, the place where Jacob had a vision of the future under Jehovah, became a symbol of all that was bad in religion. It became the World's church.

### **As You Sow, So Shall You Reap**

After Bethel Jacob continues on his way with a lighter step, "he lifted up his feet", yet the encounter with God had not radically changed his personality. *Gen 29:1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.* As he approaches Haran, he comes across some shepherds at a well, reminiscent of the servant of Abraham yet unlike that godly servant he does not enquire of the Lord, he enquires of men. *Gen 24:12 And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Gen 24:13 Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: Gen 24:14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy*

*pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

The shepherds tell him that he has found Laban's dwelling, when Rachel suddenly appears. *Gen 29:6 And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.*

Jacob tries to get the shepherds to move on perhaps to speak to the young woman alone? *Gen 29:7 And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.*

The text appears to indicate that he was very much mindful of his mother Rebekah at this time, which might go some way to explaining his tearful outburst. *Gen 29:10 And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. Gen 29:11 And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.* (Was there a family resemblance that triggered this emotion?)

It is interesting to reflect upon the remarkable providential meetings that occur in the lives of the patriarchs, here as with Abraham's servant. There is no such thing as 'luck' or 'chance' in this life. The national lottery has nothing to do with chance although many people think that it does. *Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

There can also be no such thing as an accident! There are casualties and victims in this life, to be sure but no accidents. We tend to use such terms to display our ignorance of causality.

Jacob finally gets to meet Laban who warmly greets him and offers him hospitality. Laban is also quick to assert his authority in saying that Jacob should not 'serve' him for nothing. *Gen 29:14 And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month. Gen 29:15 And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?* Jacob is about to become a servant and start to reap some of what he had himself sown. He had through the deception of his brother Esau shown that he wanted to be served rather than serve but now the tables are turned by a clever schemer. The man who had not served God is to become a servant of man.

The scriptures teach us that the way of the transgressor is hard, just how hard we shall see and it also reveals a deep rooted principle of God's dealings namely, that what a man sows, he shall also reap. *Pro 13:15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard. Gal 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Actions have consequences which by a remarkable irony reflect the actions of the individual.



God requites men in a precise way as Adoni-bezek found out to his discomfort. *Jdg 1:6 But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. Jdg 1:7 And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.* Pharaoh, through his fear of the Israelites set about drowning the young babies and in due time lost his firstborn but also dies by water when the sea devoured the chariots and horsemen after the Israelites were delivered. *Exo 1:22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. Exo 14:28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.*

Ahab lusted after Naboth's vineyard and had him murdered. The dog's licked the saint's blood but God reflected this infamy by killing the wicked king and the dog's licked his blood in turn. *1Ki 21:19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. 1Ki 22:38 And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.*

King Asa put a prophet in the stocks but God punished him with diseased feet. *2Ch 16:10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time. 1Ki 15:23 The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet.*

Then there is the classic retribution for Haman who made some gallows for the Jew Mordecai. The King Ahasuerus was deprived of sleep and whiled away the night looking through the public records where he discovered Mordecai's faithful service without reward. *Est 6:1 On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.* The enquiry condemns Haman's treachery and he is hung on his own gallows. *Est 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.* Are we left in any doubt that what a man sows, that also shall he reap?

In Jacob's case there are some remarkable parallels in Jacob's life. He deceives his father and is deceived by his father-in-law. Jacob pretends to be the elder to deceive Isaac and is deceived by Laban into accepting the elder daughter. Laban who clearly tricked the younger daughter Rachel is in turn tricked by her. *Gen 31:35 And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.* Jacob cheated his brother of the birth right and is cheated ten times by Laban concerning his wages. *Gen 31:41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.*



Jacob cheats Isaac by disguising himself with the skin of a 'kid of the goats' and later concerning Joseph is deceived by the coat dipped in the blood of a 'kid of the goats'. He was in this like Isaac deceived respecting his favourite son. God is not mocked. Jacob was set to serve seven years for his beloved Rachel and it passed so quickly because of his love. The days fulfilled, he claims his wages and the wedding is arranged but not as he wished. Leah, the elder sister is substituted for Rachel.

This raises many questions in our minds for example, where was Rachel when this deception was going on? What did she really feel for Jacob and what was she feeling while all of this was going on around her? Was she forcibly restrained or was she a party to it? How did Leah feel? How was Jacob so easily duped by the sister? How could he spend his honeymoon in such intimate contact even supposing it were pitch dark and not in the whispers of love detect the difference (are women all the same in the dark)? Had Jacob been given too much beer? Were they that much alike or did Leah disguise herself and perfume herself to perfect the deception?

Laban shrugs off the deception as a custom, and after the time is fulfilled (a week) he hands over Rachel but Jacob still has another seven years service to perform for Laban.

### Adventures in Biology

The marriage to the two sisters brings its own problem of jealousy as Rachel has no children. *Gen 30:1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.* She rounds on Jacob demanding children, making him angry and it is perhaps a taste of the tension in his household. Rachel is also prepared to go to great lengths to have children, albeit surrogates yet it proves no lasting satisfaction. *Gen 30:4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.* It is no substitute for one's own offspring.

Jacob is cast in the role of a prize bull as he seeks to keep the peace between his four wives but the answer is not to be found in intercourse but procreation. Rachel also resorts to a strategy by seeking help from what many commentators have supposed to be an aphrodisiac, something to arouse sexual excitement. *Gen 30:14 And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes.* *Gen 30:15 And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes.* *Gen 30:16 And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.*

Since the largest sex organ resides at the top of the spinal column it is no surprise that the effects are induced in the mind. Aphrodisiacs may be classified into two groups, (1) psychophysiological (visual, tactile, olfactory or aural and (2) internal (food, alcohol, drugs or medical preparations). The second group have played a significant part in the history of the subject yet they appear to have little

scientific evidence to support their claims. There is no evidence so far that they have a physiological effect upon the genitourinary tract.

However it does not appear from the text that Rachel wanted these for both her and her husband rather for herself. This may indicate that rather than an aphrodisiac, they had an effect on fertility, substances we call today, gonadotrophins, because they target the gonads or reproductive organs. Two pituitary hormones follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and Luteinizing hormone (LH) encourage fertility. They also have the side effect of multiple births. Although Rachel may not have understood the biochemistry, that would not have rendered the process void.

The answer to the problem of Rachel's infertility lay with God who had closed up her womb. *Gen 30:22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.* It raises the dilemma as to whether one should resort to artificial methods to enhance conception or accept the status quo, praying to God alone to change the condition. It may help to break down the problem into some component issues. One is respecting the providence of God and the attitude towards Him (conscience) and the other is the application of scientific advances. The former issue of one's attitude is extremely important, particularly if the infertility is a consequence of Divine chastisement. Infertility is not generally recognised as a disease but it may be a treatable condition (see our notes on HEALING). Whether this treatment should be supplied from public health care is another matter. The latter issue of the appliance of science to the condition may be considered a mere extension of the use of naturally occurring chemicals and an extension of man's applied knowledge.

Jacob tries his own biological experiment in order to increase his possessions among the herds by the application of a technique which is still a matter of conjecture in this post-Mendelian world. *Gen 30:31 And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock: Gen 30:32 I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire. Gen 30:33 So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.* It would be assumed that the white or black colours among the flocks were dominant traits (homozygotic) and the blotchy specimens recessive. On this assumption Laban would be seen to get the best deal. There are at least two explanations to the events before us.

Firstly, Jacob did not have a clue as to what he was doing, and was practising some 'mumbo jumbo' technique that he had picked up. God overrides his ignorance and blesses him according to the promise and we just associate the cause and effect, the rods produce ringstraked and speckled flocks.

The second explanation is that Jacob **did** know what he was doing (after all he was about 90 years old and had a lot of experience with the flocks) although I am not suggesting that he understood the biological process. Indeed there is still no satisfactory explanation today, for what he did. (**Note at**

**2020.** We are looking at the effects on genes called methylation, which does not change the gene but changes the expression of the gene. Environment certainly can alter the way genes make things) There is no evidence that by influencing the brain (via the optic nerves) a selection process is affected in the reproductive organs. This is a form of Lamarkianism (the inheritance of acquired traits) but as we have suggested elsewhere the sperm and the ovum live in a dark world of their own unable to receive information (genetic changes or thoughts) from other parts of the body.

It is not understood at present how a chemical (or other input) might affect the DNA in order to improve the selection of certain traits although selective in-breeding can produce abnormal populations with a particular trait. It may also be that mankind in the early days of civilisation was more sophisticated than we are prepared to acknowledge. We do not know what knowledge God endowed man with at creation (we know language, syntax and reason were present). Suppose he also had knowledge about husbandry and breeding the cattle? That would not be unreasonable as part of the provision to enable him in his task of subduing the earth. He may have lacked technology initially but not knowledge. At the end of the day Jacob succeeded but God gave the increase.

### Your gods Go With You

Pride might presume that many of the blessings that we receive from Christ in this life are because of something that we have done, some special award for merit. This is not always the case. Laban was greatly blessed when Jacob was living with him. *Gen 30:27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake. Gen 30:28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.*

It appears from the text that he learned this by 'experience' but the Hebrew word implies divination or fortune telling, perhaps from the demons associated with his house gods. The Christian however learns the same lesson but from God, namely that what we have is for Christ's sake (sake = cause or account), particularly forgiveness. *Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 1 Jn 2:12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.*

When Jacob's favourite son went into Egypt, his master, Potiphar, likewise received blessing for Joseph's sake. *Gen 39:5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.*

What we get is for Christ's sake.

Laban milked the situation, but Jacob clearly had won despite the rule changing and this doubtless rankled with Laban who becomes disenchanted with Jacob. *Gen 31:7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.* The countenance changes, no words needed speaking but his face showed all. Friendship with sons has gone and the Lord tells Jacob to leave but He would be with him. *Gen 31:3 And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return*

*unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.* God smiled! His wives likewise harbour the resentment that they were sold and had no inheritance! *Gen 31:14 And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Gen 31:15 Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.* The years take their toll perhaps because of what was never said?

Why though did Jacob need to sneak out? God had told him to leave but not how he should go, yet he goes true to form. Surely a trumpet would have been more appropriate for the righteous? *Pro 28:1 The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion. Isa 52:12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.*

Sometimes in the face of difficulties our faith dims and our boldness withers. The courage we have in numbers is not present on our own. In all circumstances we should drill our minds to grasp the words of Paul that *"if God be for us who can be against us"* such that we are confident in every situation. *Rom 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?* I think that there is much justification for creedal and liturgical statements repeated weekly if they make us remember the message. Jacob still fears man more than God.

As the family leaves, Rachel steals her father's Teraphim (healers) or images. If we examine the word in context, we learn that the Teraphim are credited with the attributes of speech and are consulted with. *Zec 10:2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd. Eze 21:21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver.*

Physically they were quite large. *1Sa 19:16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster.* They are also associated with inheritance and property rights of owner according to archaeological findings. Rachel may have stolen them to validate the claims of her inheritance. Laban calls these his gods yet how could a man who acknowledged the power of Jehovah trifle with idols? *Gen 31:30 And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? Gen 30:27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.*

The reason lays in the nature of idolatry which tells us something about the idolater. All sin is at heart selfishness the worship of self instead of God, the substitution of self for Christ. Idolatry is covetousness. *Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:* Self seeking finds gratification in all sorts of things. It may be with respect to another man's wife or his possessions. It may extend to forms of addiction such as drugs, pornography, theft and so on but all have at root self gratification, the dependence upon things other than Christ. This materialises in an

attempt to focus in an object of one's own creation, a representative of one's self the work of man's hands. *Psa 135:15 The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.*

Nebuchadnezzar made a great golden statue, his own self image for the people to worship and set himself in the place of the Almighty. *Dan 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Dan 3:2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

The consequence was that he was punished by being brought as low as the animals. *Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.*

Paul warns us of this judgement in Romans. *Rom 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

It also reflects stubbornness in the heart, the unwillingness to go God's way and this sums up the person of Laban. *1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

Did Isaac really know his in-laws that well, if so, would he really have wanted his son Jacob to have spent 20 odd years with an idolater, a covetous and stubborn man? It is surprising that Jacob survived the experience. Rachel is influenced to possess the Teraphim because of her upbringing which stuck to her. She had no doubt seen her father worshipping and talking to his idol and this had become a part of her life.

There is a phenomenon called 'co-dependency' which looks to explain certain addictive behaviours. Have you noticed that people abused in childhood often marry an abuser? The children of alcoholics tend to marry alcoholics. You might have supposed that the experiences would have been enough to put them off of these people but they become hostages to them. Just like real hostages they often become extremely sympathetic to their captors. They cannot readjust to life they are dependent, co-dependent on that personality.

There is a serious lesson on parenting to be drawn out of this. Children pick up many things from parents that the parents do not want them to have. A momentary slip of the tongue, a bad word or a particular attitude and action and there it is, ingrained for life. If you want a child to pursue a right course for life, then you must instil it from scratch. *Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

Thankfulness to God, obedience to parents and true worship are learned from the cradle.

### From Jacob to Israel

I wonder how many times we might have met angels and not recognised them. *Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* Not so for Jacob who recognises them immediately. *Gen 32:1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. Gen 32:2 And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.* Yet despite his contact with the supernatural he still lacks a solid faith in the Lord of heaven and earth and readily resorts to human solutions to overcome his fear of men. God is about to teach him a lesson that we also may learn.

The ghost from the past Esau, returns to haunt him and with him all the old fears return. *Gen 32:6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Gen 32:7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;* Instead of drawing on the promise of God he resorts to strategy. *Gen 28:13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; Gen 28:14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Gen 28:15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

I am not suggesting that strategies and contingency plans are always wrong but in the case before us the man Jacob had the promise that God Himself would bring Jacob home to Canaan! The thing is he always found it hard to trust God when the going got tough. By dividing the party into two there was a hope that one group would survive. Having made this decision Jacob resorts to prayer having recalled the promise of God and then goes on to hedge his bets by an attempt at appeasement. *Gen 32:7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; Gen 32:8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape. Gen 32:9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: Gen 32:20 And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.*

Jacob's attitude is little different from that of Uzzah who knowing that God did not need man's help to stabilise the ark of the covenant nonetheless put his hand out and touched it. *2Sa 6:3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 2Sa 6:4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 2Sa 6:5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. 2Sa 6:6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 2Sa 6:7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.*

Peter, who wanted to save Christ from death was in reality doing the devil's own work because he had no regard for the will of God. *Mat 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Mat 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. Mat 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

There are many other examples where God makes clear his purpose and man ignores it or tries to embellish it. Men often ask "why are there so many different expressions of Christianity?" I would ask how many have the pattern and teaching of the New Testament? You will note that there are many practices and omissions that reflect man's attempt to prop up the church of God.

Having sent all before him, alone with his fears he wrestles with a man (Heb: Ish = mighty man) until dawn. *Gen 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.* Hosea comments that this was in fact an angel but no ordinary angel as we learn from the end of the passage in Genesis, it was God (Elohim). *Hos 12:4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us; Gen 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*

John tells us that no man has seen the father but those who have seen Jesus have seen the Father which implies that if Jacob saw God, then he was looking at Christ. *Joh 6:46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Joh 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

This as we have seen before is called a Theophany or manifestation of God (see the angels that visit Abraham).

Just under what circumstances Jacob encounters the 'man' and what prompts the wrestling contest

is not made clear. It is quite possible that it occurred in the dreams of the night as had the visitation at Bethel when again Jacob was alone. *Gen 28:12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.*

This loneliness may be an important factor in what follows for it is often only in the depths of desperation that men call out and more importantly from the depths.....listen. How many people pray out of habit more than out of need? How many prayers are made without listening for a reply? How many prayers are like the one way conversations of people who enjoy talking about themselves but never listen to what you have to say? When there is a real need people begin to listen to responses. Jacob was ready to listen.

Some people view this event as Jacob taking on the 'man' in order to get a blessing, but note the words, *there wrestled a man with him*. Some people see Jacob as the instigator of the contest but then it would be *there wrestled Jacob with him*. The 'man' was trying to get something out of Jacob not the other way around. The contest proceeds to the point where Jacob is given an infirmity at which stage he is clinging to Christ. *Gen 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. Gen 32:25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. Gen 32:26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* He has arrived at the point of dependence whereupon he will not let go until he gets a blessing.

The name change is something that occurs many times in scripture when God changes the course of a man's life. *Gen 17:5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

Jacob was no longer to be the supplanter, he was to become the prince and father of the nation that was to bear his name, Israel. Appropriately, the sun rises on him. *Gen 32:31 And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.* More importantly the encounter with God assures him that he is indeed preserved, safe in Christ. For Jacob this may be the point of conversion, the realisation that he is now part of the family of God.

It is true for all believers that they must come to a point where they enter conflict with God. Coming to Christ is likened to being born again and being born is a period of travail where one enters into a new life. *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Joh 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Joh 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* It often worries me when people make a profession of faith without having come through a period of wrestling with God because the Kingdom of God is not an easy prize.



I do not think that it is wise to ease a person's suffering as they enter this critical phase of personal conviction. It is often the closest encounter we have with God and it is one of the most precious moments to look back upon. While we can rejoice in it we should let the individual make the effort.

## Dinah

The catalogue of disasters that unfold in the 34th chapter of Genesis were avoidable but as with many human situations blame is often placed on others while refusing to examine our own contribution to the problems. There is one of those little signs that hangs in the office which says, "the first thing to do when projects go wrong is to look for a scapegoat".

When Jacob moved in with the Canaanites he had a reasonable idea of their moral standards. Like the Egyptians they thought nothing of taking any woman that they fancied, without the slightest twinge of conscience. *Gen 12:15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Gen 20:2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. Gen 26:7 And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.*

Living near to the Canaanites placed any of Jacob's women at risk.

Not that Jacob's own family is a particularly good model for his children since he is polygamous (but note that this is not termed adultery in his case). This caused its own problem as we have seen in a previous study and it was not the pattern laid down in creation. *Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 1Ti 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;*

It does raise a number of questions for example 'what laws existed at the time of the patriarchs' and 'how were these laws codified'? We have to wait some 300 years for the Exodus and the law giving at Sinai (Ex 20).

We cannot presume that the Mosaic laws existed in such detail in Jacob's day. In fact the Levitical prohibition concerning sexual relations with one's sister would have made the reproduction of the human race impossible, since who else could the sons of Adam married? *Lev 18:9 The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.* Because of this, we must be careful that we do not judge the patriarchs above the limits of their revelation and there can be little doubt that revelation has increased through the ages. New Testament morality has far higher moral requirements than the Older Testament. *Mat 19:7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? Mat 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. Mat 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and*

*shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. Mat 19:10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.*

Moses gave them far more 'room' to manoeuvre!

Dinah is in a difficult position for which we may have certain sympathy. She was the daughter of Leah and we might estimate her age as around 14 years. *Gen 30:20 And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. Gen 30:21 And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.*

She would also appear to be the only girl at this time in a large family of older brothers. While she may have enjoyed the unique favouritism and protection afforded by loving big brothers she lacked companions among her contemporaries. It is therefore not strange to see that Dinah goes off and makes friends with the natives. *Gen 34:1 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.* As she does so she enters the nightmare scenario feared by all Christian parents.

The Bible warns us about the companions that we make in this life, and it is not unreasonable that parents exercise their judgement on behalf of their young until they can be trusted to make their own judgements. If we spend time teaching children how to read or cross the road safely, we should spend time teaching them how to judge the characters of companions. *Pro 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Psa 119:63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

In the company of these girls, Dinah is seen by a young man, Shechem son of Hamor a Hivite. *Gen 34:2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.* Later, in the period of Moses relations with Hivites was forbidden although there is no indication that this is the case at this time. *Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. Deu 7:4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.*

True, Abraham did not want a Canaanite for his son Isaac but the moral reason is not stated. *Gen 24:3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:* Later on we see that Judah marries a Canaanite as does Simeon a villain of the piece before us and no adverse comments are recorded about this. *Gen 38:2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite,*

*whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. Gen 46:10 And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman.*

Shechem takes Dinah but we should not assume that it was by force or without mutual consent. In fact he loves her dearly and she does not appear to have run home from the scene screaming for we find her in Shechem's house. *Gen 34:3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. Gen 34:26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.*

The details of the event reach Jacob and Hamor, Shechem's father strolls over to sort things out and it would appear that things proceed outwardly on a reasonably amicable basis. The brothers are angered however because Shechem ***had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.*** *Gen 34:7 And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.*

Just what is the thing ***that ought not to be done***? It was that an uncircumcised man lay with an Israelite. *Gen 34:14 And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us:* Although the son's of Jacob exercise deceit it would appear that the problem of intermarriage could be overcome if the Canaanites were circumcised.

There is a principle here which becomes codified in the Law of Moses. The unequal yoke was in principle a relationship outside of the covenant which was symbolised by circumcision. Within the covenant the act that Shechem had committed although not the right approach to procuring marriage was none the less capable of resolution. *Deu 22:28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Deu 22:29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.*

In order to satisfy the wrong to the parent, compensation was paid and in order to show that single people should not enter casual relationships divorce was forbidden them. Shechem was treated wickedly by Jacob's son's which just goes to show how merciful the Law of Moses was. As David observed many years later, that it was better to fall into the hands of God than the hands of man. *1Ch 21:13 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.*

### **What Things to all Men?**

When the Apostle Paul stated that he would be *all things to all men* it was not because he was a weak willed compromiser. *1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* It was not because he could not handle conflict and so used disguises to avoid it. It was part of his plan to serve mankind and to win men for Christ. *1Co 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all,*

*that I might gain the more.*

In this respect Paul did not attempt to make himself outwardly different from the people he lived amongst so perhaps from his appearance he was just like anybody else in the cities that he visited. The difference lay in his inner attitude and desire to reconcile men to his God. It was his driving ambition to *live for Christ*, it was indeed the very reason for his existence. *Php 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* How many of us professing Christians could say that?

In order not to miss any opportunity for a Christian witness Paul minimised the differences between himself and those he would speak to thus he became *all things to all men*. Of course there would be no moral compromise in doing so, for example he would not have become a drunk to win a drunk or a homosexual to win a homosexual. There were limits!

Jacob does a pretty good job of mingling with the natives but the natives have no idea of his beliefs. The natives approach him in a familiar manner and his daughter is very friendly with the local girls but as far as their beliefs went, that was a closed book. *Gen 34:7 And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.* I doubt that Jacob had any intention of converting the natives and that his faith was like that of so many Christians a selfish faith. A faith that basked secretly in the glories of God but didn't care for the lost around them. If Jacob and his sons were evangelical, then the natives would already have been persuaded into the covenant by circumcision.

While we may criticise Jacob what of ourselves? Yes we have got what we wanted out of Christ but do we want to share it? Do we have as the prime reason for our socialising with the lost souls of this world that we do so to win them for Christ or do we just like their company for trivial and selfish reasons? It seems to me that for all his poverty Lazarus had spoken to the rich man about his redeemer because the rich man knew that Lazarus had a message. *Luk 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: Luk 16:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Luk 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Luk 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

Like the poor widow who cast all that she had into the treasury he out of his poverty had something to contribute. That rich man in hell did not look across at Lazarus accusingly and say "why didn't you tell me about this awful place" he wanted Lazarus to have the opportunity of telling his brothers the same message that he had received in life. What will your friends say to you when they lift their eyes up *being in torments*?

Yet for all of their ignorance and the fact that they knew nothing of the history of Jehovah, these Hivite Lords were nobler than the house of Israel. The noble savage. *Gen 34:19 And the young man*

*deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father.*

Throughout history the church and the western nations founded upon Christian beliefs, have failed to exercise those beliefs outside of their own walls. The history of the Americas and Africa are replete with examples such as the imposition of catholicism which resulted in the forced baptism and subsequent execution of the south American Indians. The slave trade in Africa that treated the black as subhuman and more recently Apartheid founded upon Dutch Calvinism. In North America the Native American who had for centuries managed the resources of the continent had his subsistence destroyed in a few decades (buffalo) and was pushed into poverty by the greedy white men. In Australia, the native Australian aborigine was treated in the same manner virtually wiped out by the white man's disease. Two faced Christianity after the pattern of Jacob has been with us ever since.

Jacob's witness in the family was obviously weak and ineffectual, which is not surprising from a natural coward. There is little difference between Jacob's children and those of our own royal family. He did not produce many noble sons with the exception of Joseph who perhaps because of favouritism (Joseph lacked a mother and so did Benjamin) had more input from Jacob than the others.

The children clearly ruled the roost because Jacob waits for his sons to return before he says anything. *Gen 34:5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.* In fact the sons take up the conversation and direct the affair. *Gen 34:13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister: Gen 34:14 And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us: Gen 34:15 But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised;*

Jacob was a moral coward all of his weak life and because he never made any bold and faithful decisions, he spent his days in a "fire fighting" exercise, extricating himself from the results of his deceit and weakness. *Gen 34:30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.*

Like Eli's sons Jacob's sons are wicked. *1Sa 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.* At the end of his life which he describes as short and evil he curses Simeon and Levi's anger and condemns their cruelty. *Gen 47:9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. Gen 49:5 Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Gen 49:6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a*

*wall. Gen 49:7 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

Far too late in life he warns his soul not to *come into their secret; unto their assembly*. If only he had taken that stand earlier he would not have been haunted by the spectre of this massacre all of his days. It is not easy to make tough moral decisions as parents. It is often a very lonely and difficult road to go down but if you don't the consequences will be far worse for you and the children. Will your last words have a curse for your children because you failed as a parent?

### Spring Cleaning Your Life.

God appears again to Jacob again when he left Padanaram coincident with the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse. *Gen 35:9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him.* It should be noted that God does not appear every day to the patriarchs not that He is not present, rather He is unseen.

The nature of communion with God is something that is quite hard to explain. For Christians, prayer is the primary means of communication but prayer is not always answered with words from heaven after the manner of Matthew and I am very suspicious of those Christians who constantly exclaim that God told them to do this or that. *Mat 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mat 17:5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

In fact it has been my observation that these people are not very solid Christians, they are flakey

The frequency of direct communication in scripture is hard to ascertain, because it tends to be biased towards recording those instances. There are also periods when God is almost silent and times of outpouring such as the New Testament times. *1Sa 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* However, when God answers prayer in the New Testament it is often by a spiritual manifestation rather than a voice from heaven. *Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*

Why is this? It may have something to do with two aspects of the nature of God namely His immanence and His transcendence. Theologians use these terms to describe the presence and closeness of God (immanence) and His greatness and glory over and above His creation (transcendence). While we might prefer God to be immanent we have to understand His transcendence and this we are taught in His communication to us. The communication with Jacob prompts his conscience with the effect that he proceeds to get the junk out of his life. *Gen 35:2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:*

The all seeing Holy God has that effect upon sinful men. *Luk 5:8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* It is clear that for all the years since he passed out Laban's household Jacob had allowed Rachel's Teraphim to influence his family more than the Lord God of Heaven and Earth. Men love idols because they can come to terms with immanence more than transcendence. They must have tangible symbols because they do not have faith. Blessed is he who has not seen but has believed. *Joh 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Bakers Dictionary of Christian Ethics describes idolatry as "*evil because the devotee instead of placing his trust in God puts his trust in an object from which the desired good cannot come and instead of submitting himself to God submits himself to some degree to the perversion of values that the image represents*". That idol may take many forms. It may be self, another person (a woman, man or child), dependency on drugs, pornography, sport, and so on. It may serve you well to ask yourself the question and you owe it to yourself because you alone answer to God, "what things in my life are claiming the place of God and His service?" For example, looking back over the last year, what things have started to claim time that used to be given to God?

The strange gods had made the family 'dirty'. *Gen 35:2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:* We often come to terms with our own smells and if you live with a smell long enough it won't notice, but the idols were a stench in the nostrils of God. As if to highlight this uncleanness the family undergo a ritual of changing their clothes and they buried the idols. I find this a strange way to dispose of the idols. It is like having a pornographic video coming under conviction of possession and then taking it to a second hand shop to get rid of it. It's there for someone else to get hold of or for you to retrieve. He should have burned them! There is a big difference between putting something away and hiding something away.

The other lesson of 'possessing' idols is that the children of Jacob must have grown up with them taking them to be a normal part of domestic life. Surely it is important for Christian parents to examine even more carefully, the things that they take for granted but may influence others for evil? Religious spring cleaning is not a bad idea and perhaps the festival of Lent in the Church of England brings this home?

I think that the period that Jacob is going through is one of removing the past, a putting off of the old and a putting on of the new. *Eph 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; Eph 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

It is a scene of death. The idols go. The old nurse Deborah dies one who had brought up his mother

and no doubt in turn himself. *Gen 35:8 But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth.* Rachel also dies on the way to Bethlehem in childbirth (was she a victim of her own ungodliness?). *Gen 35:16 And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. Gen 35:17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. Gen 35:18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. 1Ti 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.*

Thus in a short space of time Jacob becomes isolated from his past.

There is a great danger that we become over attached to this world as if it is the only place to be and all that exists. It is not surprising under such circumstances to see that God systematically removes things from our lives to bring us to the point where we cry with Asaph the Psalmist "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee". When Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him it is a question that we should also find directed to our own hearts. *Joh 21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

### The Generations of Esau

Among my collection of commentaries I find that there are a number of writers who make no comment on the 34th and 36th chapters of Genesis. The 34th chapter deals with Dinah and the Hivite (very topical recently with the news that a 13 year old girl married an 18 year old waiter in Turkey and a 10 year old Mexican girl was pregnant by her 22 year old boyfriend). In both cases the law played Israel and tried to break the relationships. The 36th chapter deals with the generations of Esau.

Why does the scripture devote a whole chapter to the family of a man who sold his birthright? There must be a reason for putting this in the sacred text and I will suggest some ideas for us to meditate upon.

Firstly, Esau was a profane person. *Heb 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* Profane people are not just discarded by God they are not forgotten by God. God knows all the generations of the wicked intimately by name even if you change your name (cf Judith = Aholibamah). *Gen 26:34 And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: Gen 36:2 Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;*

Secondly, Esau sold **HIS** birthright. *Heb 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* He had the right to the inheritance promised by God it



was his right by birth and yet he despised it. He sold it for a bowl of stew, or as the AV interprets "a morsel of meat". The Greek word (brosis) means literally 'that which is eaten' and it is also used to describe the phenomenon "corrosion". It certainly did corrode his life but it also had the effect on his generations, because they too lost out!

I was coming home the other day and I noticed an old lady walking along the pavement and a strange thought came into my mind. I saw my granddaughter as that old lady many years in the future, long after I had gone on to glory and I thought "who will be looking after you Jade as your life approaches its end?" It also made me think about how much I had done for her and my generations. Had I done good or bad, had I irrevocably damaged their future? Esau had wrecked the future for all of his descendants and that for a seemingly insignificant meal.

God hated Esau. *Rom 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Mal 1:3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.*

Indeed there is not much to like in a person who cared so little for God's gifts and who had such little concern for his offspring. However it was not because of these things that Esau was hated by God, it was according to Romans to establish the purpose of God's choice by calling and not by works. *Rom 9:11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)* In other words there was nothing that Esau could do about his life, no suitable work would ingratiate him with God.

Esau is therefore a monument to the Sovereignty of God. He is no better than Jacob indeed he is "out of the same lump" and you cannot explain their fortune by bad genes since honour and dishonour spring from the hand of the Eternal potter who decrees all things. *Rom 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

There are, unfortunately people who will never change, people that we will speak to who will never be able to accept Christ as Saviour. That however is not an excuse to avoid evangelism. There are some people in the church called Hyper Calvinists. They hold an extreme view of the Sovereignty of God which holds that, since God predestinates men and that men are by nature unable to respond, there is little one can do for them and hence it is pointless to speak the gospel.

The fact is that both Sovereignty and human responsibility are taught in the scripture. Christians are obliged to evangelise and that obligation does not require the prior knowledge of who will respond. *1Co 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!* (Incidentally, I would not want to give the impression that because hyper-Calvinism is right wing theology that the basic tenets of Calvinism are wrong).

Esau and his generations are cut off from God and they became the enemies of Israel. *Gen 25:30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. 1Sa 14:47 So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his*

*enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them.*

Eventually they are destroyed. *Oba 1:18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.* Among those generations we find one Eliphaz the father of Teman. *Gen 36:11 And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz.*

As we have seen in our studies of Job, one of his accusers is called Eliphaz the Temanite. *Job 2:11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.* If the man in Job is a descendent of Esau bearing one of the family names, then this would place the dating of the book of Job later than we had speculated. There is also a son of Beor. Was this Balaam who led the people of Israel into temptation? *Gen 36:32 And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom: and the name of his city was Dinhabah.* *Num 22:5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:*

There is also a trivial record of the donkey boy who found the mules. *Gen 36:24 And these are the children of Zibeon; both Ajah, and Anah: this was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father.*

People like to be remembered for something (perhaps that is why we have tombstones). What would you like to be remembered for? There is a wonderful memorial to a woman who did something for Jesus. *Mat 26:13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.* The story of her kindness has become part of the gospel. Jesus included her deed in His gospel!

We can be remembered for some pretty 'naf' things and I hope that we can be remembered for more than finding some old mules!

### Joseph the Loved Son they Hated

We now move towards a study of one of the great characters of scripture, Joseph. We shall see many facets of his life that will lead us to make comparison with that of the person and work of Christ. This should not surprise us since we should expect the world to treat Christ the same in whatever generation He appears. How so you ask? It is my belief that Christ is formed in every Christian in every age of man, Older Testament included. *Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,*

Jesus may appear in us to a greater or lesser extent depending upon how much of His nature we suppress! *Joh 14:20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.* It is Christ in us that the world does not like and it is this image that is under attack by satan. *Joh 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* Christ was in Joseph just as He is in every Christian and this Christ does not like evil. That is one of the tests of His presence and with Joseph the brothers conduct disturbed him because it was evil. *Gen 37:2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*

We do not know what it was that the brothers had done, whether Joseph had rebuked his brothers about their conduct or whether Jacob did anything about the report. It is most probably mentioned in the context of Jacob's favouritism in order to illustrate why the brothers hated him. *Gen 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.* Jacob's love was expressed outwardly because it was 'seen' not just in the display of the famous "technicolour dreamcoat"! *Gen 37:4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*

I find Jacob's attitude quite surprising but one not untypical of the law. I do not see how it is possible to have children and make favourites and friends. *Deu 21:15 If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Deu 21:16 Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: Deu 21:17 But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.*

The 'coat of many colours' or 'coat with sleeves' was a royal garment a long tunic. *2Sa 13:18 And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.* Christ was likewise distinguished by a special garment, perhaps not unlike Joseph's. It was seamless like that of the priest's. *Joh 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. Exo 28:32 And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent.*

Joseph like Christ was hated. *Gen 37:4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. Joh 15:25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.* Jesus was hated because he exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and no doubt Joseph

because he did the same among his brothers. They did not have a kind word to say to him and every appearance was an opportunity to vent their hatred.

Every word from Joseph fuelled their anger as did his dreams. *Gen 37:5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. Gen 37:6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:* One might have thought it prudent not to have said anything to the brothers but the dream was prophetic and could not be withheld. The dreams that are recorded are similar in their meaning although the symbolism differs.

The dreams also give us a few clues about interpretation. Firstly, people may appear as symbols (sheaves, stars, sun and moon). The dream of Joseph is interpreted in the passage as symbolising dominion and so the action in the dream conveys the meaning more than the symbols. *Gen 37:8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.*

Secondly, the symbolism need not be historically or numerically accurate. By that I suggest that we should not make too finer point about interpreting each of the various elements of a dream. It is the overall picture and message that is important. The moon is interpreted as Joseph's mother Rachel, and Rachel you recall is dead! *Gen 37:9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.* Without the benefit of hindsight we might interpret that detail as implying Rachel's resurrection or a fulfilment of the dream beyond their lifetime in glory.

The message of the dream is childishly simple, that Joseph would have a position of supremacy over his whole family. That and that alone! That point was clearly understood by all present but although Jacob was angry he filed the information away. *Gen 37:8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. Gen 37:10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? Gen 37:11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.* The brothers must have understood and believed the dream because they were envious. The history of Joseph shows us that he was possessed of the peculiar ability to interpret dreams as well as dream them. This gift may well have been exercised before and the brothers knew that, hence their reaction.

The action precipitated by the dreams is critical to the fulfilment of the dreams, since it provoked the chain of events that put Joseph in the position that made it all come true. As we see later on in the book the brothers come cap in hand to the court of Pharaoh and fall before Joseph as it was written. *Gen 42:6 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.*

It would appear that through all of this Joseph sees the hand of God directing his course as one who

would make preparations to preserve the family. *Gen 45:5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. Gen 45:7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.* There are no words of rebuke, angry demonstrations or hatred shown to his miserable brothers. For a man to suffer the privations that Joseph did and be so amenable is a strong indication that he was being supported throughout the trial.

Joseph understood the sovereignty of God. He is one who could truly say that all things worked together for good. *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* It didn't matter what man intended what counted was what God intended. *Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.* Joseph looked at God and so he could feel no anger to man. His brothers were mere players in the Divine plan.

### Conspiracy to Murder.

Joseph the favourite, lives quite close to his father and does not appear to be involved in the shepherding of the flocks. He is given the task of a messenger by Jacob and it is this action that sets in train the sequence of events that will bring him down into Egypt and his father down to the grave in sadness. *Gen 37:12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. Gen 37:13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. Gen 37:14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. Gen 37:15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? Gen 37:16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.* Clearly, his father had not been sensitive enough to the feelings of the other offspring as he doted upon Joseph. *Gen 37:17 And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.*

The family of Israel had a vengeful streak as we have already seen with the treatment of Hamor the 'noble savage', and they also behaved in the same way with their own family. Clearly the choice of this family to head up the church in the Older Testament was not based on their holy life styles but is another example of Sovereign Election!

As Joseph approaches his brothers, they conspire to kill him thinking that in some way this action will undermine the power of his dreams, as if Joseph himself controlled the process! *Gen 37:18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. Gen 37:20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.* It may also be that they had not understood the Divine nature of the revelations.

It is a sad characteristic of our nature that human hatred leads to murder. We might ask if this act is

also provoked by satan as part of his vendetta against Christ. *Gen 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

Any attack upon man is an attack on the image of God.

It is hard to understand how killing somebody solves any problem unless one is suffering direct violence from an individual. If one is aggravated there is often recourse through law which may make compensation or ban people from coming into contact if reconciliation cannot be reached. Murder is not a solution.

When marriages break down, they may often generate harsh feelings and hatred but killing the individual was never an alternative to divorce unless adultery had taken place and the death penalty was exercised **communally**, not individually (except in the case of the avenger of blood). *Lev 20:10 And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. Deu 19:6 Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.*

The act of hatred is itself an act of murder. *1Jn 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

In scripture the death penalty, judicial execution is the prerogative of God, and may be delegated provided due process is upheld. Magistrates or rulers act as agents for God in upholding order in society which is a Divine right subject to the law of God. *Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:* It is not the freedom to create its own rules for putting men to death (i.e. making theft a capital offence).

The dispute between Joseph and his brothers should have been resolved within the family after all they were brothers. It should also have been resolved at an individual level and that responsibility lay as much with Joseph as with his brothers.

Within the Christian church it is accepted that disputes will arrive for various reasons but they must always be resolved within the family of the church. Where the issues are not resolved in reconciliation there are sanctions. *1Co 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. 1Co 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*

There is for example avoidance or 'shunning' which does not always imply "no contact at all". *1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 1Co 5:10 Yet not altogether with*

*the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 2Th 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 2Th 3:15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.* They are to be admonished (nouthetic confrontation – setting them in mind).

There is deliverance to satan as a remedial measure not as a permanent punishment (perhaps the false idea of satan punishing men in hell is derived from this idea). *1Co 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1Ti 1:20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

This also involves the concept of excommunication which is the only way to deal with a persistent offender. *1Co 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Tit 3:10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;*

There is a rebuke or reproof a verbal reasoned warning to encourage soundness in teaching. *Tit 1:13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;* Also, we are to make our disapproval of certain acts by our refusal to associate with 'christians' who persist in immorality. *1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.* Paul realises however that the world is full of these evils and to obey this as far as the world is concerned means that we would have to leave the world. *1Co 5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.*

The death sentence is not one of the disciplinary actions open to the church. The church has no right to pronounce the death sentence upon a brother or sister! Why though should the death penalty be given to the world's rulers and not to the church, since we shall judge the angels, an even greater task?

There may be implicit in these ideas that the believer should do nothing worthy of death, being as wise as a serpent but as harmless as a dove. Having been redeemed by Christ we are owned by Him. *1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 1Co 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

It is therefore Him and Him alone who make execute this sentence as is the case with Ananias and Sapphira. *Act 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, Act 5:2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid*

*it at the apostles' feet. Act 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Act 5:4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. Act 5:5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.*

Christians may suffer discipline at the hands of Christ but not their own brothers. For this cause some are sick and some sleep. *1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

### Joseph's Progress

Reuben emerges from the wicked brothers as one having some care, not so much for Joseph's sake but for his father. *Gen 37:22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.*

He doesn't appear to have the courage to stand against the brothers but attempts a compromise whereby Joseph is put in temporary custody, in a pit. It reminds us of another prophet who had a message that was unpopular and suffered a similar fate. *Jer 38:1 Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, Jer 38:2 Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. Jer 38:3 Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. Jer 38:4 Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. Jer 38:5 Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you. Jer 38:6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.*

Reuben felt the responsibilities of the firstborn but lacked authority. *Gen 37:29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. Gen 37:30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?*

The attitude of the brothers indicates the lack of moral understanding that is present and typical of the Older Testament. It is one that views the externals and bases its judgements on externals. If it was out of sight it was out of judgement. This reveals a distinct lack of knowledge about God and His law. The son's of Jacob considered that murder by default (assassination) was a lesser sin and they were happy to commission others to do it. *Gen 37:26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Gen 37:27 Come, and let us sell him to the*



*Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.*

The position of God is better revealed in the New Testament through Jesus. ***Thou shalt not kill*** may have been the sixth command but it was not the complete revelation of the will of God. The law judged a man for murder but God judged them for anger. *Mat 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: Mat 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

You will note however the caveat "without cause". Anger is not wrong where there is a cause it is a God given attribute that enables us to express displeasure.

Not content to give him away, they sell Joseph for 20 pieces of silver. *Gen 37:28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.* It was another son of Jacob, Jesus who was also sold, but for 30 pieces of silver. *Zec 11:12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. Zec 11:13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD..... Mat 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;*

Judas was stricken with remorse and no doubt in time this happened to the sons of Jacob but one wonders what they did with the money. Like many criminals, a cover up is organised and it is decided to make out that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. *Gen 37:31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; Gen 37:32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. Gen 37:33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.*

I was reminded of the "Dingo baby case" in Australia, where Lindi Chamberlain, a Seventh Day Adventist was accused of murdering her child and blaming it on a wild animal. Even though the woman was acquitted the trauma of the event destroyed the marriage. I imagine that the repercussions of the faked death of Joseph hung heavy over the family.

The brothers take a kid of the goats to provide the bloody evidence of Joseph's death. This choice is quite remarkable as it is a ***sin offering***. *Lev 4:23 Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish:* Whether they understood it or not, it bears a parallel to the Gospel of Christ. We read in Paul's letter that Christ was "made to be sin for us". *2Co 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

We should better translate it that He was "made a sin offering for us".

Just as Joseph the innocent suffered betrayal at the hands of the Israelites that he might in due season save them so too Christ (the son of another Joseph) suffered betrayal at the hands of Israel that He might save the Israel of God! The brothers return to their father and apply consolation of deceit. *Gen 37:35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.* It shows how insincere and unloving they really were (it wouldn't surprise me to find that they spent the 20 pieces of silver on a present for him). Yet there are many sincere Christians who do exactly the same thing.

This happens because they do not know how to translate the theory of theology into practical theology. Ideas in the abstract are fine until they meet reality. Let me give some examples. When tragedy strikes people ask "how can a God of love do such a thing?" Instead of focusing on the sovereignty of God there is an immediate attempt to divorce God from the event and attribute it to some evil power or malevolence.

The same thing can happen when someone dies of a painful illness particularly when they have not given any indication of faith in Christ. We are often swept into condolences with words like "well at least their suffering has stopped". Whatever happened to the teaching of peace with God through Christ Jesus? You see we too can be deceitful comforters, even unwittingly. If you have no knowledge or a word from God – STAY QUIET!

The final thought I would like to present is one that relates to the subject of providence. Some people still look for signs in the sky to interpret the events in the world, I speak of Astrology. Christians should have nothing to do with this because it has nothing to do with God. Don't even get into the habit of reading them for "fun".

We should not use providence to interpret God's word. In the case of Joseph, events would indicate a failure of the dream of Joseph's rise to power. We might be tempted to rewrite the script. If we do then we have fallen into the trap of interpreting the word of God by providence. To the contrary the word always stands firm even if events seem to indicate otherwise. We have to stick to the word until the plan is fully revealed. This is the point that Paul is making in the letter to the Romans. *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

### **Sex and the Church.....1**

We might ask why the story of Judah is inserted into the story of Joseph being taken down into Egypt. I think that there is a significant link and that is that they relate to sexual encounters. The subject of sexuality in the churches is seldom dealt with because of the embarrassment it causes and

there are certain words that people find very hard to use! Yet the inability to cope in a godly manner has brought many a good man down. *Jdg 14:1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. Jdg 16:6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. 2Sa 11:3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?*

Many parents find it a hard subject to communicate and perhaps because of this children sense that the whole subject is something that cannot be treated in an open and mature way. It becomes a subject for the washroom.

In the chapters before us we encounter casual sex, onanism, prostitution and infidelity. *Gen 38:1 And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. Gen 38:9 And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. Gen 38:15 When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. Gen 39:7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.*

Those involved are the people of God and each of the situations that they got into was avoidable. In other words, through ignorance or wilful disobedience these things came to pass. The Bible is full of sex and violence.

Sexual problems within the churches are far more widespread than people might think. **Christianity Today** commissioned a survey of its readers a few years ago. There were two groups, Pastors and Lay Readers(!). 2000 questionnaires were sent out but only 30% replied (perhaps because the material was too threatening). 12% of the pastors admitted sexual intercourse with people they related to in their ministries. 18% admitted kissing, fondling and mutual masturbation etc.

Among the laity 45% admitted having done something sexually inappropriate, 23% had extramarital intercourse and 28% said they had engaged in others forms of extramarital sexual conduct. Let us remind ourselves that we are not talking about the unbeliever we are talking about professing Christians!

Not that it is something new. It was tolerated within the Corinthian church and Paul observes that the church is behaving worse than the world. *1Co 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 1Co 5:2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*

The world's preoccupation with sex can be seen in the burgeoning porn industry (now sanitised to 'top shelf' magazines), the Daily and Sunday Tabloid papers which contain little news other than

stories of who did what to whom and why. These same papers have the cheek to make moral pronouncements while living off immoral gossip.

The television particularly some cable channels broadcast explicit sexual material. Marital unfaithfulness is an accepted theme of many movies and plays because people want to see it. It is market driven and not surprisingly so. Let me illustrate.

In the epistle to the Romans Paul shows the penalty for vanity and perverting the image of God is that the individual in turn is perverted. *Rom 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Rom 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

Gods' penalty is not to strike the person blind, turn them into a thief, make them a leper or a murderer. He perverts that fundamental relationship that symbolises His relationship with His people, namely marriage or true sexuality. *Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

He unleashes lust and this drives the individual to unnatural relationships. *Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:* It will be like a drug and it is the perversion of the perverse.

When a society is in decline and ungodliness increases you will see the signs of sexual perversion increasing. The Bible illustration of Sodom is proof of this. Clearly, if perversion of the truth of leads to degenerative sexual relationships and immorality, the conformity and acceptance of the truth of God will tend towards godly sexual relationships.

The church is also being swept up in the judgements upon the world but can the church extricate itself from the judgement upon the world? Only if she recognises and repents. That is not likely at present indeed, homosexuals are now gaining recognition as bona fide members of the church and acceptable candidates for ordination (!). The next step will be to accept adultery and paedophilia as normal practice.

Let us approach this subject from biblical perspective in order not simply to find out what is right and what is wrong but to come to an understanding of the reason behind the rules, namely the mind of God on the subject.

That starts with the creation of male and female not primarily for sexual gratification but for companionship. *Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will*

*make him an help meet for him.*

Men are to find true companionship with the opposite sex and it is a duty to leave parents and find that companionship. *Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

Sadly today our values and guidance have more to do with the fashions and needs of the age rather than Him who by wisdom framed the worlds.

### **Sex and the Church.....2**

The hypocrisy of the sons of Jacob is seen in the willingness to make liaisons with the Canaanites (the uncircumcised). *Gen 38:2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.* Here is illustrated a first principal of sexual relationships namely that believers should seek believers as their partners.

The passage in Corinthians is not given in the specific context of marriage and is a general principle that must embrace a wide range of social intercourse. *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?* The Christian must exercise his mind when embarking on any enterprise or activity that may compromise his faith. Marriage in particular is illustrated in the Church/Christ relationship, a relationship based upon mutual affection and belief. *Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

It is also a relationship of companionship. *Mal 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.*

Solomon was not as wise as we might think or perhaps his brains were in his loins. *1Ki 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; 1Ki 11:2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 1Ki 11:3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 1Ki 11:4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

In his old age, when we might have expected the essence of a wise life to have emerged there was nothing of godliness to be found. His lust had been his downfall and although it is not mentioned, in line with what we have already commented on from Romans he may have succumbed to other perversions. *Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 And changed*

*the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Professing himself to be wise he became a fool.*

The basic criteria required prior to a physical relationship are:

1. No prior commitments (this would make it adultery)
2. It must be with a member of the opposite human sex (otherwise it is bestiality or homosexuality)
3. It should be monogamous (illustrates the Church/Christ relationship)
4. They should both be believers. We are also informed that the union is validated by God and God alone not man and it should be noted that sexual intercourse does not have to take place for the marriage to be validated. *Mat 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

It appears that Judah is primarily motivated by what he saw just as Samson was. *Gen 38:2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. Jdg 14:1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.*

John warns us of the danger of the lust of the eyes and the Proverbs too echoes the thought. *1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. Pro 6:25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.*

The porn industry relies on this fact that lust is a part of our sinful nature

Lust, James informs us, is a root of war but it is also an indicator of self gratification. *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Jas 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Jas 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

When those men saw the women and desired their bodies it was not so that they could cherish them or sanctify them. It was so that they could gratify themselves. This I believe is where many marriages fail. The partners turn inwards rather than outwards, taking rather than giving, demanding rather than encouraging contrary to the word of Christ (Husbands love your wives as Christ... *Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, Eph 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Eph 5:28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. Eph 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

What then might be the remedy to this? It is to use God's bandages. *Pro 6:21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.* It is the discipline of filling your mind with God's thoughts and developing that obedient relationship that makes Him the focus and reason for living. *Psa 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.* The Psalmist hides God's word in his heart that he might not sin against God because he was concerned that he would be offensive to God. *Psa 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* That is not easy because the flesh will war against the spirit.

Just be honest with yourself for a moment. Do you live your life with that as a real concern or do we turn a convenient blind eye to the word because we like to satisfy our lusts?

It should not surprise us to see that the sons of these affairs are not very nice people. They are the result of a mixed marriage and a poor parental example and I would suggest a lack of godly discipline. Er the firstborn was so wicked that The Lord removed him and the next son in line is sent in to raise up seed to the dead brother. *Gen 38:7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. Gen 38:8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.* These sons are disobedient but can we lay all the blame at their feet.

There has been concern expressed recently over certain magazines aimed at young people, that says they are too sexually explicit. There is a call to regulate these books in some way. Why though if it is a problem, aren't parents taking a hand in dealing with it? Concern has been expressed over the lack of sex education in schools but again, where are the parents in all of this? Parents have a duty to the community to police their own family. *Deu 21:20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.*

By the same token they are not obliged to support any family member who will not obey the rules. More than that they are positively discouraged from maintaining the profligate child, that is, it is ungodly to encourage the support of disobedience.

This is exactly the principle that is taken up in the New Testament. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* The church is not to become a home for lazy consumers who will not contribute to its prosperity and it is duty bound to act. If Judah had acted to provide for the spiritual welfare of his children and been a disciplined parent he would have avoided the suffering and sin which fell upon him but as we shall see he was a man who would not do as he would say. *Gen 38:26 And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.*

### Sex and the Church.....3

At the close of chapter 38, H C Leupold in his otherwise excellent commentary concludes that this chapter is entirely unsuitable for homiletical use! How wrong or naive can you be? Judah took a wife

for his son perhaps at that stage he found her attractive his eldest son dies and Onan takes his place. *Gen 38:6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar.* The act of Onan is in contravention of the later Levirate (Lat. Levir = husband's brother). This custom appears in other cultures and became enshrined in the later Mosaic Law. *Deu 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. Deu 25:6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. Deu 25:7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Deu 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Deu 25:9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. Deu 25:10 And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.*

In Israel, the law was to secure the name or inheritance of the brother. It should also be noted that the Mosaic Law carried a rebuke not a death sentence for non-compliance.

Despite the fact that Er was a wicked brute God does not commend Onan for failure to perpetuate the wicked brother's name. There is a lesson here that it is not for us to make judgements about the suitability of those who should receive the "seed" or to question the purpose of God. There is a danger that as Christians we may be selective in to whom we give the good news of Christ. We may consider some too wicked or unworthy yet the duty is to broadcast the seed. God gives the life and we must trust His word not to return to Him void.

However, it was not simply a duty for the brother, the widow was obliged to implement the law. *Rth 4:1 Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. Rth 4:2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. Rth 4:3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: Rth 4:4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Rth 4:5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. Rth 4:6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Rth 4:7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Rth 4:8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. Rth 4:9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and*



*Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Rth 4:10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.*

In a sense it is the demand of the Israelite women to be given the opportunity of bearing the Messiah and not to be left childless, and for Ruth this is truly the case. The Levirate law is referred to in the gospel not though to encourage it's continuance but to focus on the transient nature of marriage. *Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Mat 23:24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Mat 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Mat 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Mat 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Mat 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, Mat 23:30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.*

Following the death of Shuah, Judah's wife's daughter, Judah is naturally upset and also I would suggest vulnerable. In such a state he sought comfort in the company of a prostitute. Vulnerability is something a Christian counsellor should always take into account particularly where the person seeking council is of the opposite sex. If someone has suffered bereavement, a breakdown in marriage or some personal problem they are naturally looking for some form of comfort, assurance or affection. This will make them vulnerable and the relationship open to abuse. It should be a rule that where such emotional disturbances occur that counselling should be undertaken by two counsellors and preferably of the same sex as the counselee. We shall return to this subject of vulnerability when we view the case of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

It may be another sign of Judah's mental state that he did not recognise Tamar his daughter-in-law and that he so richly endowed her with such personal items as a pledge. Perhaps he was under the influence? When it comes to redeeming the pledge Tamar is not to be found. Tamar it would appear had deliberately hatched a plan to trap Judah into honouring his word regarding marrying his son and she was prepared to go to any lengths to achieve her aims. She is clearly a desperate woman but the means are no justification of the end or so we might think. Turn to Matthew's gospel chapter 1 and verse 3. The child of this union was the seed of Christ! *Mat 1:3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;*

On that day in that place, during that act Christ was in a manner of speaking present, latent there. In that union the genetic content of Christ, the humanity, was passed to the next generation as part of

God's plan. It is as if God goes out of His way to provoke our moral sensibilities by choosing harlots (Rahab), adulteresses (Bathsheba) and adulterers (Judah and David) as part of his family tree and passes His humanity through unscathed. God is not tainted by this and we are left perplexed.

Can we excuse the events because the characters are living in ignorance at a time when there were no godly laws because the Ten Commands and the case law of Israel have not been formally given? I do not think so. Tamar was not married at the time Judah went into her so she is not committing adultery but it does seem that prostitution was not acceptable at this time. *Gen 38:24 And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.*

The penalty, burning, is a penalty for prostitution under Moses but for a special reason and only applicable to the daughters of priests. *Lev 21:9 And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.*

Judah acknowledges that he too is wrong in a roundabout way but rather than confess to adultery he admits the lesser charge of not giving his son in marriage. *Gen 38:26 And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.*

In many ways he is like his descendant David. David could not conceive that after his adultery and the subsequent successful plot to despatch Uriah, Bathseba's husband he had done anything wrong. *2Sa 12:1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2Sa 12:2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: 2Sa 12:3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. 2Sa 12:4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 2Sa 12:5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: 2Sa 12:6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 2Sa 12:7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;*

Christians can be equally insensitive to sin because they have a conscience that is not exercised. *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.* You can study the conscience in more detail in our handbook but you may recall that its primary function is the provision of moral stability to the individual through godly knowledge. If we neglect to question events, actions and thoughts, bringing them before the light of God's word to see if they are good or evil, we will lapse into godlessness and sin. The sad thing is that we will not even feel the slightest guilt about what we do. The man of Romans 7 did not know the meaning of a

sinful act until the law had explained it to him. *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

#### **Sex and the Church.....4 (Sexual Harassment in the Old Testament).**

Joseph by the providence of God finds himself in the house of one of Pharaoh's captains whom we find is also a eunuch. The word eunuch is a Greek word meaning a keeper of the bed (Gk eune: a bed) or chamberlain. These emasculated men were given positions of responsibility because they would not produce a dynasty that would conflict with the king. *Jer 52:25 He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city. Act 8:27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,*

They were impotent or sterile. Sometimes it would appear that they would undergo castration in order to enter high office. Castration has been practiced for all sorts of reasons even in this century, the castrato, boy singers with girl's voices, were a product of this practice.

Joseph had a testimony of God's presence. *Gen 39:3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.* Joseph was the Bible in action but how did Potiphar see that the Lord was with him? It was not just in the prosperity. Blessings often follow believers. "Blessings abound where're He reigns". He was totally trustworthy and honest and this is an unusual trait among employees. Executive theft is rife today.

It is to be noted that in his rise to fame and fortune, Joseph makes no attempt to contact his family. He remains in Egypt and serves his foreign masters waiting God's time to fulfil His plan. He is also a good example of someone "making the best of a bad job".

Paul shows us that bad experiences are a channel for God's strength. *2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2Co 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 2Co 4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 2Co 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* Of necessity we are earthen vessels containing the Excellency of Almighty God. If we had strength in our own nature then the life of God would not shine through. *2Co 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

We must also come to acknowledge by experience that all things work together for good... *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the*

*called according to his purpose.*

In Joseph we see the blessings that accompany a godly man. *Psa 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. Psa 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. Psa 1:3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.* He shall prosper. Again in the Sermon on the Mount putting God first in your life and taking care of the spiritual is the way to secure the things of this life. *Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Joseph also comes to the notice of Potiphar's wife who openly propositions him and rightly he refuses. *Gen 39:7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.* Being married to a eunuch (yes it did happen) may explain the woman's ardour. It may have been the naivety of youth or lack of worldly wisdom that led Joseph to pass the matter off. He did not bring the matter to Potiphar's notice perhaps due to embarrassment. As a result the wayward wife persists but Joseph refuses because of the position of trust that God has given to him. *Gen 39:9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

Eventually Joseph makes the mistake of going into the house alone! An innocent mistake in the providence of God and one which moved the plan along another step but it is also a lesson in propriety. Married or unmarried it was very unwise for a man to enter the house of a randy woman. There is no question of Joseph's faithfulness but he is very foolish.

As Congreve noted, "Heav'n has no rage, like love to hatred turn'd, Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorn'd". Not content to let the matter drop the wife turns to attack Joseph with the charge of rape and this lie sends him to prison. There is no protestation of innocence, very reminiscent of Christ accused before Pilate and Joseph's career progresses. Joseph, like Christ, is dumb before the shearers. *Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

Potiphar is angry but the scripture doesn't say that he was angry with Joseph. *Gen 39:19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.* Potiphar would have been extremely stupid if he had not sensed his wife's wayward behaviour and it is hardly likely that this is the first time. Did he really credit his wife's story? Potiphar may have payed too high a price for promotion. This view may also be confirmed by the fact that Joseph was put with the political prisoners and not the common criminals. Potiphar did this perhaps to save face. One wonders what became of this man when Joseph came to power and no doubt with his source of blessing removed he sank into obscurity.

Are there lessons to be learned here? Joseph learned to accept the providence of God. Sometimes we feel aggrieved and compelled to defend ourselves in adverse circumstances. In the Old Testament Samuel feels the sense of rejection when Israel asks for a king. They are in effect saying that they do not want him anymore but he had not considered the wider implications of what was happening and how it affected the peoples relationship with God. *1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

There was no point in getting stressed because it would not help the situation. Sometimes we just have to sit back and enjoy the ride however bumpy it becomes. Tough Christians welcome the challenge of hardship. *Psa 119:71 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*

### Joseph the Prisoner

Joseph is one of life's blessed characters who can put his hand into a bucket of manure and come out with a gold watch. He again finds favour this time with the prison governor. *Gen 39:21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.* It must have been clear to all that the charges against Joseph had no foundation. Again Joseph prospers, not because he was the doer rather that God was behind the deed. *Gen 39:23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.*

How many times do we do things without invoking the Lord's blessing and fail? How might we have succeeded if the Lord made it prosper. The psalmist understood this. *Psa 127:1 A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

We might just pause for a moment and ask why Joseph was not sold directly into the house of Pharaoh? Why did he have to suffer the degradation and false accusations along the way? We might ask the same question of Christ.

An answer is found in the epistle to the Hebrews. *Heb 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Heb 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. Heb 2:13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Heb 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his*

*brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Heb 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Not that Christ was imperfect in the sinful sense rather it is one of those self limitations of God in the development of the individual. God decreed that this was to be the process, namely, by experience. *Luk 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.* Jesus under the limitations of our humanity developed in a normal manner.

Joseph also had lessons to learn in life. There was God's purpose **for him** and God's purpose **through him**. There was Joseph and the man God wanted him to be and there was Joseph the man God would use to save the nation. In the development of his individual character God had deemed it fitting that Joseph should mix in wider society and with people that he would not normally meet. It was also an opportunity to witness of his God.

Imagine that we only evangelised among the people that we liked to mix with or those who we would be happy to work with or live alongside. We would be working in a very narrow social environment. God clearly wants a much wider range of humanity than we are prepared to accept or live with. Surely there is a lesson in this?

In prison Joseph meets up with another unfortunate pair of eunuchs. *Gen 40:2 And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.* These men, a cup bearer and a baker had both offended the king and again, we see the providence of God working in the lives of those around Joseph, not just in these men but also in Pharaoh. We also see the power of God moving in the life of a future Pharaoh and it is of no small comfort that the mightiest and most powerful men on the face of the earth are all subject to the power of God. *Exo 9:16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.* They can do nothing without Divine permission.

In prison the eunuchs dream dreams and these dreams are prophetic. I have read that it is good to encourage young people to dream, not sleeping dreams but waking dreams, day dreams. People who have dreams are more successful in life and more stable. It is a form of future planning. Sleeping dreams are strange phenomena that are still not fully understood. The process in the brain is accompanied by electrical activity that can be measured and exhibit rapid eye movements (REM) is as if the sleeper is watching a real event. It has been suggested that the brain is somehow processing, filing and discarding the information that it has collected during the day. *Isa 29:8 It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.*

Sleep deprivation can lead to hallucinations and other physiological problems. Dreaming is a natural part of the life process and we dream at least four times a night. If you discipline yourself on waking you will find that it is possible to recall them.

Now we should not assume that all dreams have meaning or that all dreamers of dreams are godly persons even if they can work signs and wonders. *Deu 13:1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder.* It is an area that requires great discernment not the least because the symbolism of dreams is often obscure. *Gen 40:10 And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: Jdg 7:13 And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.*

Some dreams have meaning even the dreams of the unbeliever. *Mat 27:19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*

There are two primary means whereby dream can be interpreted. The first is by the outcome of events and the second is by a word of knowledge by a person possessing the gift. *1Co 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1Co 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 1Co 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 1Co 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 1Co 12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Joseph was gifted in interpretation but clearly many people are not. Interpretation of dreams is very much like the interpretation of prophecy it is open to considerable speculation. I would advise that where we have vivid, realistic dreams, dreams that trouble us, we should make a note of the content and seek the Lord in prayer for an understanding of the meaning and whether we should act on it. We should avoid a rash response. It is a bit like praying and watching over a prayer. *Col 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;*

The last days are characterised by dreams. *Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:* Just what the purpose and character of these dreams are is not clear but that should not put us off the phenomenon. The expectation should lead us to seek a sound understanding of them because God has clearly a purpose in giving them to us.

## Butlers and Bakers

The butler and the baker are both given dreams which pronounce their own destinies (Gen 40) but without the wisdom of Joseph they were oblivious of them. Joseph asks that the butler remember him before Pharaoh when he is released and speak kindly of him but as with so many people in this world gratitude is short lived. *Gen 40:14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: Gen 40:23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.*

People are by nature users.

The story of the ten lepers typifies an attitude of ingratitude or the inability to give thanks. It does not come easy to the sinful nature as all of you who have children know. It is something that has to be taught. It is ten times easier to cry for help than give thanks. One of the lepers recognised the providence of God in his healing and returned with thanksgiving. Such faith "saved" the man even the Samaritan. *Luk 17:11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Luk 17:12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: Luk 17:13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Luk 17:14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. Luk 17:15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, Luk 17:16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Luk 17:17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Luk 17:18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. Luk 17:19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*

I would infer from this that the others were Jews those of the church of Israel, those to whom thankfulness should have been second nature! *Lev 22:29 And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will.* If any characteristic should mark a man out to be a Christian it is this, that he gives thanks. *1Th 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* It is God's will that we should give thanks.

I would go further and say that it is also a characteristic of true friendship (not acquaintance). It is a mark that we do not take each other for granted but that we respect and value those things which are done on our behalf. We take the trouble to recognise each other's contribution. Moreover we should if we are the friends of God return often to Him from whom all things proceed to acknowledge His gifts to us. *Joh 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Joh 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Joh 15:15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

Joseph remains incarcerated for another two years before Gods' plan to bring him to power is put into motion. *Gen 41:1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and,*



*behold, he stood by the river.* We might sympathise with Joseph and say "what a waste of a good man" but it was not a waste in Gods' eyes. Sometimes men may be a whole lifetime in preparation for what may be a short season of fruitfulness. How much sadder though if we give up or lose hope and become unprofitable. Paul was called "apostle", separated from his mother's womb yet it was 17 years after the Damascus road revelation that he entered into his evangelistic labours. *Gal 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, Gal 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Gal 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. Gal 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Gal 1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Gal 1:21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; Gal 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: Gal 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. Gal 1:24 And they glorified God in me.*

Even for one such as Paul there was a great deal of learning to go through until God had him fit for service. I infer that for Joseph he too was not yet ready.

We are all familiar no doubt from our Sunday School days with the dreams of Pharaoh. God had again chosen to reveal the things that were as yet not, to another who did not know Him. It is also an example of the Sovereignty of God over history. Pharaoh had not made a lucky guess about the future God had revealed His purpose in advance (just think what you could do with next week's lottery numbers!). *Gen 41:28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.*

The dream brought a conviction of sin to the butler and he recalls Joseph's special gift. *Gen 41:9 Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:*

Hurriedly Joseph is brought from the prison, cleaned up (shaved!) and presented to the king. In all the excitement, Joseph has not forgotten that what he has is a gift from God. *Gen 41:16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*

How ready he is to acknowledge his faith!

The dreams were related, the two were in fact one in order to establish the certainty of the event. *Gen 41:32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.* For some reason Pharaoh is convinced of the truth of Joseph's interpretation. *Gen 41:37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. Gen 41:38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? Gen 41:39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Gen 41:40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be*

*greater than thou. Gen 41:41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. Gen 41:42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; Joseph could have been a con artist for all that Pharaoh knew of him yet he trusts this man. Surely God Himself had brought this great conviction upon the king?*

Not only does he exalt him to the second power in the land but he confers upon him a special title, "zaphnathpaaneah" which means "saviour of the world". Here again we see Christ in the life of Joseph who was also about the same age as The Lord. *Gen 41:46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. Joh 4:42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. 1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

Just as Joseph was the instrument of salvation for the earthly nation of Israel, the Jews according to the flesh, Jesus is saviour of the Israel the true Jews. *Gal 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

The story of Joseph's rise to power should be an encouragement to all Christians that under God we may all achieve great things. *Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* Christianity often loses its way when it starts looking inward and has no vision. *Pro 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.* It receives nothing because it seeks nothing. Over the past few years I have seen many declining churches with a few old people filling the seats, a sad testimony due to lack of Power in Christ.

We leave Joseph this week in better circumstances. Not only is he second in the land he also receives a wife the daughter of an Egyptian priest. *Gen 41:45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.* From this arranged marriage come two great tribes of Israel Ephraim and Manasseh. *Gen 41:51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. Gen 41:52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.*

These children brought joy to his life and marked the turning point in his fortunes. Later when Jacob comes to bless the boys he seems to have succumbed to the same mistake as his father Isaac. *Gen 48:13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. Gen 48:14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God*

*which fed me all my life long unto this day, Gen 48:16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. Gen 48:17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. Gen 48:18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. Gen 48:19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. Gen 48:20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.*

Yet as has happened many times in the Bible, God reverses the natural order of things so that He might establish the spiritual precedence of His own will.

### The Entrepreneur

Joseph is an entrepreneur and the man who can forecast the future. He is also capable of planning efficiently and accurately to meet the demands of the consumer. I do not think that we should confuse what Joseph does with government (central planning). Who like Joseph ever invokes God in the plans for the future? *Gen 41:25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. Gen 41:28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.*

Either through ignorance of God or a failure to appeal to God, government planning does not involve God and is consequently unstable in contrast to what we have here where God sets the agenda and establishes the plan. *Gen 41:32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Isa 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*

Politicians and economists try to plan for the future in terms of their own ideology which has religious elements. They look to provide health, wealth, longevity, peace, plenty, in short the garden of Eden but in reality they are creating 'Babylon the Great' which is inherently unstable. In 'one hour' the whole culture is destroyed by God. *Rev 18:17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,*

As a rule, there is no security on this earth (unless there is a word of prophecy from God). *Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also..... Act 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. Act 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified*

*by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Act 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Act 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

Agabus does not avert the famine but he can alleviate the consequences. We enjoy peculiar blessings in our land that are certainly not the norm for the majority of the world, most of which we take for granted (fresh water, food, homes etc) and we seldom consider the frailty of the world that we live in. Things appear to continue without change. *2Pe 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* Who though is the real provider when men hunger?

I am not suggesting that the idea of national prosperity is wrong it is the fact that God is not involved in the process. *Psa 127:1 A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* Neither is it right for the people of society to expect the government to provide welfare when they are capable of working themselves. *2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* What is surprising here in Egypt is that the people appear to make little effort to store for themselves although that is not untypical of most of human society.

In preparation for the lean years, Joseph takes a 1/5th of the surplus in the 'fat' years. *Gen 41:34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.* He does not take the surplus as a tax rather he purchases it (Bush commentary Vol 2). I do not think that we should presume that God is doing all of this for the benefit of the Egyptians. The Egyptians shared the blessing that was primarily for the Israelite nation. *Gen 45:7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

This is a good example of what we call 'common grace'. The fact that God makes the sun shine on good and evil men does not mean that He favours the wicked. *Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* The wicked share the benefits of the good because the laws of physics require that to be so. The laws of light demand it. But by the same token, common grace, common curse! The wicked will be judged.

Also I would not suggest that we take the events before us to signify that we should centralise the process of Government. What happens here does not form the pattern of government in the nation of Israel under Moses, in fact the Israelites are reminded that they have been brought out of the land of Israel. *Lev 18:3 After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Deu 13:10 And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the*

*house of bondage.*

In Israel, government was decentralised a position that we observe from the fact that the prophets often came from among the people (Amos for example was a shepherd). Israel was a Theocracy and as such did not require men to direct or plan its future. Theocracy became Monarchy when the people rejected God in the day of Samuel and from that time onwards the nation began to fall apart. *1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

The result of the famine is not the same for Israel as it is for Egypt, since Israel is saved (albeit with temporary servitude) but the Egyptians becomes slaves to the false God Pharaoh (Sesostis 1 circa 1662 BC). *Gen 47:20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. Gen 47:21 And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. Gen 47:22 Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. Gen 47:23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. Gen 47:24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. Gen 47:25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. Gen 47:26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.*

Up to this time it would appear that the nation was composed of individual freemen on their own free holdings. The famine not only removes their freedom, it consolidates the nation under Pharaoh in preparation for the confrontation with Israel at the Exodus. Egypt and its bondage become a paradigm of the religious bondage that was typified by the law. *Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

Many people see Christianity as a religion that limits human freedom but nothing could be further from the truth. The problem with the human condition, sin is that it has become such a natural part of life that it is hard to face life without it. It is a drug. Liberation comes through the truth in Jesus. *Joh 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Joseph as we have said before is a type of Christ. He liberates some men and confirms others in their servitude. Joseph's life like Jesus is a progression to glory, from prison to palace, from rags to lines, from humiliation to glory. Like Jesus, Joseph takes a gentile bride to share his glory from which two sons spring, Manasseh and Ephraim. The former means forgetting and the latter fruitfulness. These are the fruit of Christ for he forgets our transgressions and makes us fruitful.

## Teaching Lessons

The famine is not confined to the land of Egypt but as we might expect from its design, it was calculated to affect the land where Jacob and his sons were residing. *Gen 41:57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.* When Jacob experiences the famine he looks to Egypt but his sons look at each other. *Gen 42:1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?*

Did they anticipate the events about to unfold? After 13 years, Jacob is still protective of his youngest son Benjamin a mark of how enduring the effects of that tragic loss of Joseph was upon his life. *Gen 42:4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.* In all this time, the scheming brothers had kept the matter a secret. I would go so far as to suggest that they did not feel guilty for what they had done and I think that this is the reason for the way that Joseph treats them.

As a good steward Joseph is careful to vet those aliens that seek to take advantage of Egypt's prosperity. *Gen 42:6 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.* One day as he sits in judgement his brothers appear, but rather than greet them or forgive them, he commences an elaborate plan to bring them to repentance. Joseph's reaction and self control would imply that he was prepared for this meeting and that he knew what he had to do.

The sight of these men bowing before him reminded Joseph of his earlier dreams {the same hebrew words are used}. There is no compassion in his tone even though he had in a measure been vindicated. *Gen 37:7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. Gen 37:9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. Gen 42:7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.*

Surely he should have been more forgiving? I think that in his own soul Joseph was a very forgiving man. That is clear later in the story but forgiveness as we have seen in a previous study is not a matter of saying sorry. In truth you cannot forgive a person who has not repented from the act for which he seeks forgiveness? If he doesn't seek forgiveness, forgiving has no meaning.

You may have no animosity in your heart to a person, you may desire no retribution and no recompense but you cannot forgive them if they do not repent. *Luk 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. Luk 17:4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

In order for a proper family reunion to take place and in order to build a right relationship for the future the past had to be purged. The brothers had to be taught a lesson! We might also consider in passing that Joseph has had 7 years as ruler in which to make a contact with his family and has not made a single move in that direction, further evidence that he is acting under God.

The idea of teaching people lessons may seem at odds with the idea of forgiveness but forgiveness is not unconditional. If a person has not learned a lesson how have they benefited and how can they have received true forgiveness (see our studies on FORGIVENESS). Think about this as it applies to the work of Christ in your life. Many people think that they are Christians but have not received forgiveness because they have not truly repented.

But there is something that precedes repentance and that is *conviction*. When the woman was taken in adultery the accusers had no sense of their own guilt until they heard the word of Jesus. *Joh 8:9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

When David sins against his neighbour Nathan was sent to David by the Lord to bring home his guilt. *2Sa 12:1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2Sa 12:2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: 2Sa 12:3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: 2Sa 12:7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; David was insensitive to his own sinfulness.*

The presence of God brings conviction to Isaiah and to Peter. *Isa 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Isa 6:2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Isa 6:4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Isa 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Isa 6:6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: Isa 6:7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged..... Luk 5:8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord*

So deep was this conviction with Judas that he could no longer live with himself. *Mat 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Mat 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

There is an element in conviction akin to the conviction fitting the crime. This is what Joseph proceeds to do. The architects of the original crime against Joseph are brought into a situation that mirrors that crime. Unsuspecting of Joseph's knowledge of Hebrew the brothers confess their sin when they see the parallel circumstance that they are in. *Gen 42:21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. Gen 42:22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. Gen 42:23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.*

This is the only place in Genesis that a confession is forthcoming.

There is little doubt that Joseph finds this re-enactment difficult, so much so that it brings him to tears. *Gen 42:24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.* It is this reaction that suggests that Joseph is doing this under instruction from the Lord. Doing the Lord's will is often difficult and painful but Joseph does not step back from his duty. If he did then he would fail his brothers and that is what he must not do. He regains his composure and continues.

There may be some lessons here in disciplining children. Firstly, there is a tendency for parents to lessen the impact of discipline because it is understandably painful to them but if they do they are failing the child. Just what is the aim of the parent? Is it to inflict pain, to vent one's own anger or instil in the child a sense of right and wrong that will lead to self discipline? If it is not the latter then it is not biblical discipline. The application of law is pedagogic, that is a schoolmaster and a parent instils discipline such that the child eventually functions as an independent adult. *Gal 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Gal 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; Gal 4:2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.*

The ultimate aim of discipline is that it leads to godliness. *Heb 12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? Heb 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Heb 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

### **The Second Visit to Egypt.**

We have considered the act of Joseph teaching a lesson to his brothers. There was no vindictiveness in his action but if there was to be a true reconciliation then the enormity of their crimes and the



acknowledgement of guilt was essential to the healing process. In this act Joseph is also kind towards them in so far as he returns their money. He will not be in debt to them. *Gen 42:25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.* This act of kindness is viewed with suspicion an act they considered that was a further snare to them. *Gen 42:28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?*

How often acts of kindness are viewed with suspicion as if there is an ulterior motive! They cannot be taken for what they are and isn't this the case with many of Christ's good deeds towards us?

When they return to Jacob he takes a negative view of the whole affair. *Gen 42:35 And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.* *Gen 42:36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.* *Gen 42:37 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.* *Gen 42:38 And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

Here was a man who had been led by God for most of his life, yet he had not grasped that fundamental principle that God works all things for good towards his people. *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.* His response is not one of prayer and meditation to come to an understanding of what is happening for he still leans heavily upon the flesh.

We might ask why Jacob did not take the lead and go down to Egypt straightaway and secure the release of Simeon and sort the matter out with the ruler of Egypt. Surely any father who loved his son would do this? Yet again in this we see the actions of a weak man who fears confrontation. This is exactly how he behaved with his brother Esau when his fear of men greatly outweighed his fear of God. *Gen 32:6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.* *Gen 32:7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;* *Gen 32:8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.* *Gen 32:9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:*

As Christians we are often confronted with evil, indeed it is to be expected. *1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:* We are often put into positions which may compromise our faith and in those situations we may seek the easy option of backing away from confrontation. But what does the scripture ask of us?

It says "resist" or literally "stand against". *Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* This greek word transliterates into our language as "antihistamine" that class of drugs that aids us when we suffer inflammation. They fight infection. The best form of defence is attack and that is what we should do in the face of evil.

Jacob procrastinates and takes no action until the food supply runs out. *Gen 43:2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.* With his head in the sand Jacob pathetically entreats his son to "buy us a little bread". He is reminded by Judah of Joseph's terms and conditions but Jacob (Israel) turns upon him to blame him for the current troubles. *Gen 43:6 And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?* Jacob would have preferred a dishonest son in these circumstances but Judah had answered in all honesty not knowing that Joseph would have made his bizarre request. *Gen 43:7 And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?*

Judah is beginning to show a streak of responsibility and is prepared to take charge of the situation. *Gen 43:8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. Gen 43:9 I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever:*

It is Jacob who has been the coward and still he would employ human cunning rather than forthrightness. *Gen 43:10 For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time. Gen 43:11 And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:*

The famine had not been so severe as to destroy all of the crops, rather it was corn, "the staff of life" that had failed. Jacob proposes that they take a present to the Egyptian ruler of the fruits of the land and "double money", perhaps this ruler could be bribed? *Gen 43:12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight:*

I wonder whether this devious streak was ever culled from this man who was to be numbered among the great men of Israel? Yet we cannot deny that he was a man of faith and is remembered among the great men of scripture. *Heb 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. Heb 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

This is perhaps to encourage us that although we may come far short of the ideal God does not hold it against us. Does the book of life contain the entry "could have done better"?

Jacob still had the opportunity of accompanying his now favourite son Benjamin but he leaves the matter in Judah's hand. There is a sense of despair as he sends him on his way. *Gen 43:14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.* Perhaps this is another characteristic of the man who found it hard to see the brighter side of life. *Gen 47:9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.*

Again on arrival, Joseph honours them but the brothers are afraid. *Gen 43:16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. Gen 43:18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.*

Having lived treacherous lives they think that all men deal as they do. They explain themselves to the steward who was also the interpreter who tells them that it was God who had so blessed them. *Gen 43:19 And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house,*

Joseph's emotions run high at the sight of his long lost brother Benjamin and he wept. *Gen 43:29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. Gen 43:30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.* There is nothing weak about a man who can cry. I would say that it is the mark of a strong man who does not fear to show his feelings. Jesus too wept (John 11 v 35 the shortest verse in the Bible) showing how He had entered into the feelings of those around him. *Joh 11:35 Jesus wept.*

It is one of those emotions that is difficult to fake and so I would suggest is one of the greatest marks of a sincere person and a true sign of empathy with one's fellows.

There was one more act that Joseph did that amazed the brothers. He arranged them at table in their order of birth and still they suspected nothing. *Gen 43:33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.*

The charade was coming to an end!

## Sin the Detective.

There is profound scripture to be found in the 32nd chapter of the book of numbers. *Num 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.* It says that we cannot escape the consequences of our sin. Sin is personified as a detective that will bring the hidden things to light. We are reminded of Cain and Abel, whose blood Screeched to God from the earth. *Gen 4:10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

Sin found him out. Moses having killed the Egyptian tried in vain to cover up the killing but someone saw him. *Exo 2:12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.* There is always a witness.

When I was a young boy I remember climbing over our neighbours fence to "scrump" some pears. I thought that they were on holiday. I remember the panic as I saw the lady of the house looking out of her window as I was caught in the act.

Sometimes it is many years before sins come to light but to be sure they will and that is why it is so important to deal with them as early as possible in order to "contain" the situation.

I read of a particularly sad case of sin finding someone out recently in a magazine. It concerned the heiress to the Getty fortune. She was a married woman (in her twenties) with two children. For whatever reason she embarked upon an affair but before she would have unprotected sex she asked the man to have an AIDS test. He came back to her and said he was clear and off they went. Within very short space of time she was diagnosed as HIV positive.

The man had lied to her and she had to own up to her husband. It wrecked the marriage and she has to live with this time bomb ticking away in her body. Her riches can do nothing for her. Sin seems so attractive at times and *stolen waters* sweet. *Pro 9:17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.* Yet the truth about all sin is that it clouds good judgement and short term pleasure has a long term payback. Joseph is the instrument of God in bringing the sins of the family Jacob to judgement.

There is a way of exploring and bringing to light what otherwise might not be known and it goes by the name "Interrogation by action". It has the same effect upon the mind as asking a question. When Jesus makes to go on beyond a certain village called Emmaus he was effectually asking the question of the men about the condition of their heart in regard to hospitality. *Luk 24:28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.*

The angels at Sodom were making the same experiment of Lot. *Gen 19:2 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all*

*night*. The purpose of this is not to deceive but to catechise and instruct, the action being designed as a sign by which a question is proposed. The mind is so focused and excited to a degree whereby a lesson in truth can be successfully imparted.

The same is true of God's action towards Abraham with respect to making his only son an offering. *Gen 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* It was a practical interrogation which no other form of questioning could have elicited a satisfactory response.

The action is only the garment of the thought which is both honourable and just. It is not deceitful and it is not trickery designed to bring the person down, rather it will elevate and open the mind of the individual. Unmeaning pretences are analogous to foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient. *Eph 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.*

There is in this a lesson to parents. If we indulge in meaningless pretences we may make light of evil and teach that hypocrisy is acceptable. The child who sees the parent frequently pretending without reason or just for amusement may conclude that this is acceptable behaviour and that he too might adopt a similar plan when malice requires it. *Mat 7:9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?* They are taught that the law of sincerity can be violated at will.

I believe that Joseph's actions fall into this category of "interrogation by action". He clearly loves his brothers and has no design of tricking them for the purpose of revenge. Vengeance is the prerogative of God alone. *Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Pro 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:*

Yet Joseph is not wrong to embark upon a series of actions which are designed to bring to the minds of the brothers a sense of duty and responsibility for each other.

It is clear that the first time Joseph employs his tactic of retaining Simeon the brothers make no strong protest or defence but acquiesce willingly. If they had responded to this there would have been no need to have repeated the prescription.

Joseph deliberately hid his cup in Benjamin's bag because he knew that this would have the most dramatic effect which as we see brings Judah to a point of refinement and strength of character unseen before.

Sometimes because we are so insensitive to the simple promptings of the Spirit it is necessary to employ stronger measures. God has to shout at us!

### The Lessons of Egypt.

God encouraged Jacob to go down into Egypt because it was in that place that He would make them a great nation. *Gen 43:3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. Gen 43:4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: Gen 43:5 But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. Gen 43:6 And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? Gen 43:7 And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down? Gen 43:8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones.*

Why? Could they not have remained in Canaan and developed in the same way?

First of all we should consider that God's plans are conceived over generations. The plan we are about to witness had been put in place with Abraham. *Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; Part of that plan was slavery and affliction. The nation that they would serve would undergo judgement and subsequently for the Israelites, the acquisition of substance. Gen 15:14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*

Being chosen people does not guarantee an easy ride. For all Christians it involves bearing the weight of the cross and following where God leads. *Mat 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* Rest and comfort are the privilege of the next world. The character for the life to come is forged in the furnace of this life.

In Canaan there was the danger of loss of identity and merging with the people. We see how prone to compromise the nation was when they conquered the land, how much more so now as they were developing? The Egyptians kept themselves to themselves and regarded the Hebrews as an abomination. *Gen 43:32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.* Their cultural isolation would be guaranteed.

Although the Israelites would have immediate favour through Joseph there was a pharaoh coming who would not treat them the same way. *Exo 1:8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.* This king would ill treat them and put them into slavery. Whatever relationship the Israelites had with their God would be strengthened by this experience and would cause them to seek Him as their Saviour. They would begin to cry out to Him. *Exo 2:23 And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.*

Egypt is a type of the law (Jerusalem below). *Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.* It represents the condition of mankind in sin oppressed and helpless. *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* It also shows us that unless we become aware of our condition and cry out we shall die in the same servitude. By the same token the nation of Israel become a type of the church oppressed.

The deliverance that God would undertake would also heighten the appreciation of the people because of the weight of the oppression. People often do not appreciate the goodness of God because of the seeming ordinariness or simplicity of His working. Miracles work a greater wonder upon the mind of those who partake in them. Difficulties accentuate the need to rely upon God. God as a result becomes a necessity of life not an appendage.

Under the protection of Egypt the nation swelled from 70 souls to around two million souls within the space of a few generations. They became a force to be reckoned with. They also stripped Egypt of its wealth when they emerged but there was one more part of the plan to be accomplished by this. Egypt was judged. The progression of plagues culminated in the great Passover.

This type prefigured the death of the Saviour Christ and with it the destruction of the might of Egypt. *1Co 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:* Egypt, the type of law (Jerusalem) is destroyed as the people pass through the waters to the land of promise.

How true this is in our own experience. We develop in this world of sin, yet we also come away from it with great wealth when Christ redeems us. The lesson of Egypt is that not all in it is bad. There is much that we have gained that we can take with us and sanctify in Christ. Worldliness is an attitude of mind and does not imply that the skills and gifts that God gives us are not worthy of retention and sanctification.

Perhaps the lesson of Egypt is again that all things do indeed work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose. *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

Jacob bids farewell to the land of promise at Beersheba. *Gen 46:1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.* Beersheba is the last outpost of the land at its southern extremity and in crossing this threshold he is at the point of no return. He would never see it again.

By way of comfort, the Lord appears to him and promises to be with him when he goes into Egypt. For all his duplicity, cunning and weakness of character God does not desert him. The Lord may not

make all men mighty, He may not correct every character defect, He may not make their way smooth and thereby exacerbate and highlight their faults. But in all of this He remains their God and will graciously forgive and forebear.

Jacob is also told by the Lord in a most gracious manner that he would die in Joseph's presence, for Joseph would put his hands upon his eyes, that is close the lids in death. *Gen 46:4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.*

### Reflections on Life.

Jacob and Joseph are reconciled under Pharaoh's roof and in gratitude the patriarch blesses Pharaoh. *Gen 47:7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.* Pharaoh enquires after his age and is greeted with a strange reply. *Gen 47:9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.* Here is an opportunity to talk with royalty and yet he seems not to take full advantage of the situation, indeed to the contrary he respond in a negative manner. What would you say if such an opportunity presented itself to you?

I heard on the news the other day that a man in Saudi Arabia had died at the age of 135 years! I wonder what his reflection on life would have been? Surely Jacob's 130 years (with 17 remaining) could not be thought of as "few"? Yet as we accumulate the years of life it seems to run faster, "How time flies", we say. Young people don't often say this. Why? Perhaps because they expect so much, they have so much to achieve and everything is before them. For the old it has been accomplished and there is little of life left to them. The years shrink visibly.

There is also something else that I think occurs. The memories that we have of the bad and sad events of life seem to stand out more than the good times. Pain is often easier to remember than pleasure. To be sure not all in Jacob's life was sorrow. When he served his crooked father in law Laban for the 7 years to obtain Rachel they seemed but a "few days". *Gen 29:20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* Certainly not evil days but pleasure runs swiftly. An enjoyable holiday is over before it starts and one wonders what one did with the time. Sadness is often drawn out.

So we might understand Jacob's summary of his life not to imply that it was all bad but that it had run swiftly and what had stayed with him were the memories of the "evil" and not the "good". There is a certain emptiness or "vanity" as the Bible puts it about our life in this world.

In the Book of the Preacher (Ecclesiastes), life is so described. *Ecc 9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. Ecc 6:12 For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun? Ecc*



*2:17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

In the Psalm, it reflects upon our "three score years and ten" noting that it is soon cut off and we fly away. *Psa 90:10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.* Life is short.

However we should observe that much in the book of Ecclesiastes is viewing life from the worldly standpoint. If that were all then we must agree it is a miserable existence, for if this life were all, as Paul observes, we are most miserable of men. *1Co 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

So it is that the writer of Ecclesiastes elevates his readers to consider the remedy for the "evil days" that befall the old. It lays in the relationship to the Creator. *Ecc 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; Ecc 12:2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: Ecc 12:3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, Ecc 12:4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Ecc 12:5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Ecc 12:6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Ecc 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

God promises the godly aged that He will bear them through this last stage of being. *Isa 46:4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.*

There is something to look forward to and perhaps this is the blessing of old age. The growing infirmity serves as a reminder and a focus of the mind that there is a life to come. If we were blessed with eternal youth in this life it would do little to help our faith, for we should be tied up with the doings and comings and goings of the world. Old age settles the soul back to consider its end.

I think that the New Testament Christian is at a great advantage over the Older Testament Christian. He has more information, more knowledge of God and a clearer picture of eternity. You will not find that the doctrine of heaven is not so clear in the Old Testament. The doctrine of the resurrection is also less well defined. Men go to the grave there but in the New Testament they fall asleep in Jesus with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. *Tit 3:7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

It is strange that in the bible we enter very few of the last moments of a man's life. There are very few death bed scenes (Jacob, David, Elisha and above all Jesus). What we do see in these brief moments is a glimpse of how a man has lived his life and how he faces this moment (Conversations on Growing Older. Cornelius Gilhuis. Pub. W B Eerdmans. pp 136 - 143).

I think that if Jacob had lived in the New Testament he would have had a more positive view of life. Not that it was less evil or longer but that it held a glorious prospect because all that he had endured was for this moment. With the great evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody, he would have enthused that "for many years I have looked forward to this day".

Old age should not be the last gasp of hopelessness but the cry of achievement. To quote one of the war poets out of context (Rupert Brooke), "Now thank we God, who has matched us for this hour". That is the truth of it. God has prepared us for this time not as the world who has no hope. All that we have learned or should have learned, serves to prepare and strengthen us to face this ultimate reality, our meeting with our God.

We glimpse this in Stephen's dying moment when he saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing to receive him. *Act 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.*

Now that is something to look forward to!

### Pharaohs and Kings.

Pharaoh means "great House", perhaps referring to the palace where the ruler resided but it eventually became a title. Up to the time of Joseph Pharaoh had been a ruler in Egypt but his power had in some measure been limited and his ability to tax the people was not made clear. To the people Pharaoh was reckoned to be like a god (Horus, the falcon sky god) and his role was to maintain justice and cosmic order established in the beginning by Ra, the Sun god. Each king was considered successor to a whole line of ancestors stretching back to the demi-gods of creation. *Isa 19:11 Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?*

The Egyptian cult also had many other false gods that it treated like humans, waking the statues with hymns each morning, washing and dressing them and feeding them offerings until they were put to bed. Their worship of these false gods puts the nation of Egypt in conflict with the all seeing God of Israel. This perversion of truth itself leads to perversion. *Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Rom 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Rom 1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Rom 1:31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable,*

*unmerciful: Rom 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

They also had as part of their religious belief the cult of the afterlife (ruled by Osiris) and great preparations were made to preserve and nourish the souls of the individuals who were passing over (the body was a material attachment for the soul) and to take some of the good things of life with them. Embalming and mourning were developed to a high degree in Egypt. *Gen 50:2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. Gen 50:3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.*

Pharaoh did not originally have the financial control (the money supply) over the land of Egypt, Joseph makes sure that he does, likewise the cattle. Pharaoh did not originally own the land of Egypt but Joseph makes sure that he does with the exception of the priesthood which is sponsored by Pharaoh. *Gen 47:14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. Gen 47:17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. Gen 47:20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. Gen 47:22 Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands.*

Here is a precedent for a monarch being the head of the church but unfortunately the example is from a pagan head of the church of Egypt.

The great famine of Egypt is the means whereby God unites the whole of the land of Egypt under the Pharaoh and gives him total control over all aspects of their domestic life. Pharaoh also receives a regular income (a double tithe) from the harvest. *Gen 47:24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.* Yet it is not for the benefit of Pharaoh that all this has come to pass it is to preserve the nation of Israel. *Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.* The power that Pharaoh had so neatly obtained in the process will in time be turned against the Israelites but that will culminate in judgement day for Egypt.

There is little doubt that Israel was led away by nations such as Egypt. *1Sa 8:5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.* The concept of a monarchy involved judgement, military prowess and leadership, and the position that God conceded in Israel was to make the king a captain over God's inheritance. *1Sa 8:20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. 1Sa 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed*

*him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?*

The man chosen, Saul was not a perfect king and did not set the standards of obedience that might have been expected. *Deu 17:4 And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel:* This elected monarch was not the people's choice although in some measure he was the embodiment of the aspirations of the people.

The Israelite monarchy, like the Judges, was to be an elected not a hereditary monarchy. *1Sa 16:1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.* I think that this idea is to be a constant reminder that God alone (Christ) is the true king of the Jews although after the time of David the monarchy becomes hereditary down to the last king Christ.

The "Divine Right" of kings is the idea of a kingship descendible in one sacred family (the position held by our current monarchy) and that as such they derive their authority from God and are responsible to Him alone. As Louis XIV succinctly put it, "L'etat, c'est moi!". There was clearly no Divine Right of Kings and the Parliamentarians were I believe correct (that authority is the result of a contract between sovereign and people).

The Coronation Oath puts the English Monarch under the obligation to support the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel (Coronation Service IV The Oath) also the settlement (of the Crown) of the Church of England (a contradiction with the Gospel). The Act of Settlement (1701) decreed that the monarch must join in communion with the Church of England!

The Queen has looked at constitutional changes, possibly giving up the position as head of the Church of England. This would be an honourable thing to do in virtue of the family attitude to Christian values but it still falls far short of a biblical monarchy.

It raises the whole issue of how a nation is to be governed and what process should be undertaken to secure that government. Is the form of government as important as the person heading it? Should we not seek qualities of leadership, wisdom and honesty in a person rather than in an elective system. To be sure, if the Christian community, the local church, serves as an example of the process then we would find family values and proven ability within the family as prerequisites of office.

### Conclusions.

Genesis starts off with the creation of a man and ends with the creation of a nation. The first man ends up a captive to sin and the nation ends in captivity to Egypt, and that is a theme that runs its course through scripture. The analogue of sin, the spiritual captivity of man, is illustrated in the temporal captivity of man to law symbolised in the nation of Israel. *Gal 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the*

*one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. Gal 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

Genesis is above all however a history book. Without it the Bible is a series of stories without any absolute references. It is all very well developing a morality but how does it fit into the grand scheme of the Universe. What makes one system better than another? Genesis squares the circle so to speak. It ties a Universal system of belief and morality with an absolute Creator and His creation. That is the only sensible way to lay the foundation of a faith!

Here are some of the histories in the book of Genesis. Firstly the history of Creation, the answer to how we got here. *Gen 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens*, Genesis accords with the world as we see it particularly at the microscopic level in the genetic make-up of the life forms according to their species. *Gen 1:11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.*

In the devil's war against God he has tried to employ humanistic scientific ideas to undermine the word of God. If the scriptures are erroneous then the bedrock of faith is washed away. The fact that the debate continues in the late 20th century is proof itself of the power of God's truth.

The history of man is the answer to why we are here. *Gen 5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;*

Following on from creation we have the sudden appearance of man, not by chance, not through a long process of evolution but at the hand of God. Man is made in God's image and therefore is unique in creation and holds the position of God's vicegerent, responsible for its stewardship. *Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

The history and origin of man's condition is catalogued in detail, the effect of sin and death. *Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Man is far from 'normal', indeed I would go as far as saying that he has a degenerative mental condition hence the need for a renewed mind. *Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* Man cannot reason correctly unless God changes his state and the natural state is waywardness. *Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray;*

*we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

The added consequence of sin was death, spiritual death. *Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:* There is also evidence of degeneration in so far as the longevity of man declines through the generations. Even so, in what is called the protevangel, Christ's victory and the victory of the church is proclaimed. *Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Rom 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

The history of righteousness, redemption and election is shown in the life of Noah. *Gen 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.* The event of the global flood is a spiritual analogue of baptism. *1Pe 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.* It marks the point of transition from judgement to new life and few are saved. *Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.*

God will judge the world again on a day that it does not expect it. *Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, Having rejected the truth and warning of Genesis the surprise will be complete. 2Pe 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* Yet the history of Genesis shows that the godly will be delivered. *2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:*

The history of substitutionary sacrifice is detailed. *Gen 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. Gen 22:13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.*

The lesson is that man cannot pay for his own crimes. You take or leave God's offer at your peril. Not that animals could die for sinners rather that they were typical of the perfect sacrifice, Christ. The animals are differentiated into clean and unclean and although not detailed until the law (Leviticus 11), it was clearly understood at this earlier date. *Gen 7:2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.* This also shows that a concept of holiness was prevalent.

The history of the church is foretold in the vision of Abram. *Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.* The church starts at the beginning of creation and comprises the elect of God in all ages. *Mat 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Thus it is not a New Testament phenomenon. The nature of true worship is also outlined in the practices of the patriarchs, such as prayer (communion with God), right practice and praise.

The history of Law precedes the Exodus. In a general sense law is the catalogue of precepts and practice that is expected of those who follow the Creator. We have in Genesis the origin of marriage, sacrifice, fornication and adultery, cleanliness and holiness, obedience and much else. Genesis reveals that the promises of God are not dependent upon law but are a separate issue. *Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.* The Mosaic Law is not the foundation of man's relationship with God in Genesis and it is not today in the New Testament. The fact that some of the principles of the Genesis ethics are incorporated into the Law of Moses is no proof that the law of Moses is valid for today's church!

Above all Genesis is the history of the nature and revelation of God. We see God as He reveals Himself in the lives of the Patriarchs through whom we gain much of our practical insight into the walk of faith. In that respect Genesis is very relevant for today's generation. We can learn from them, as it were, vicariously.

This study concludes 3 years after its commencement, on  
19th October 1996.